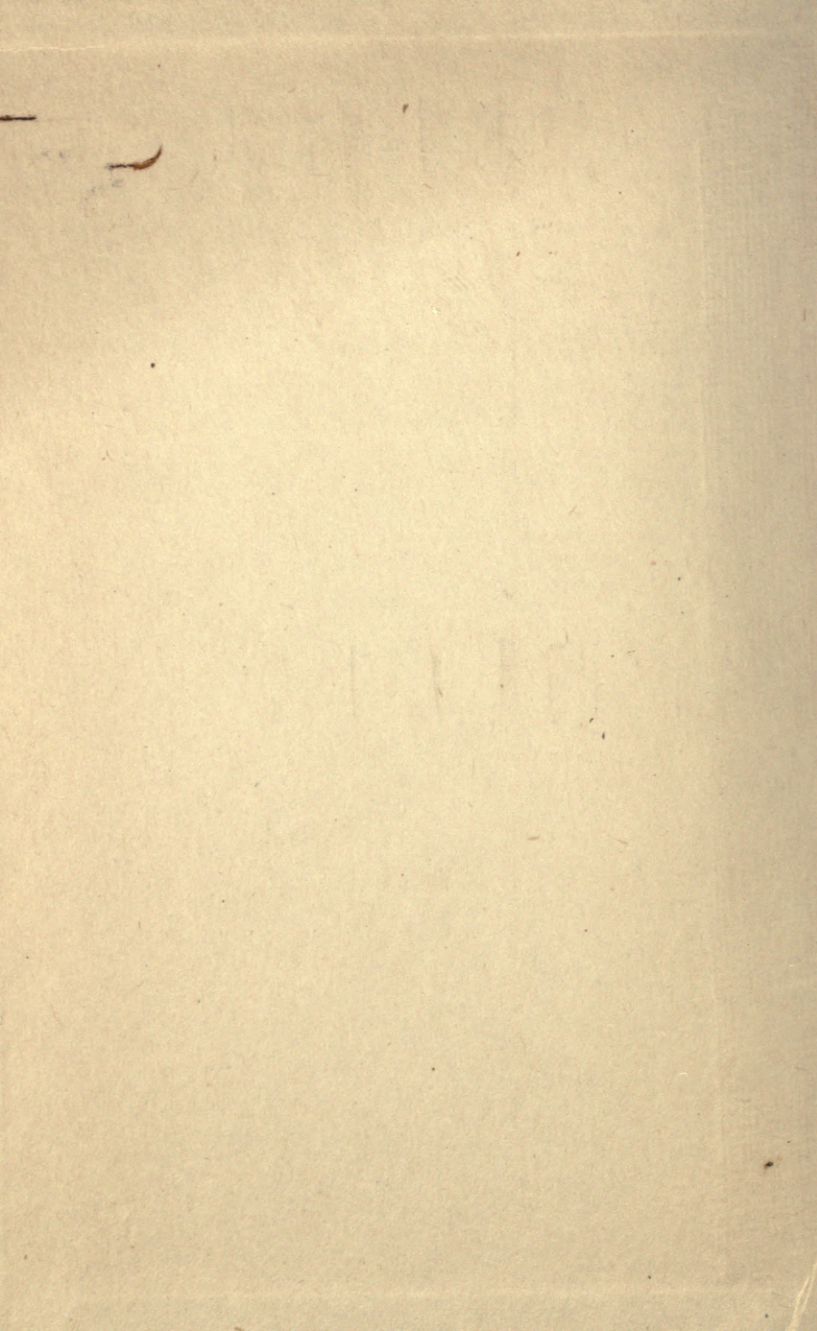


JAUNTY IN CHARGE

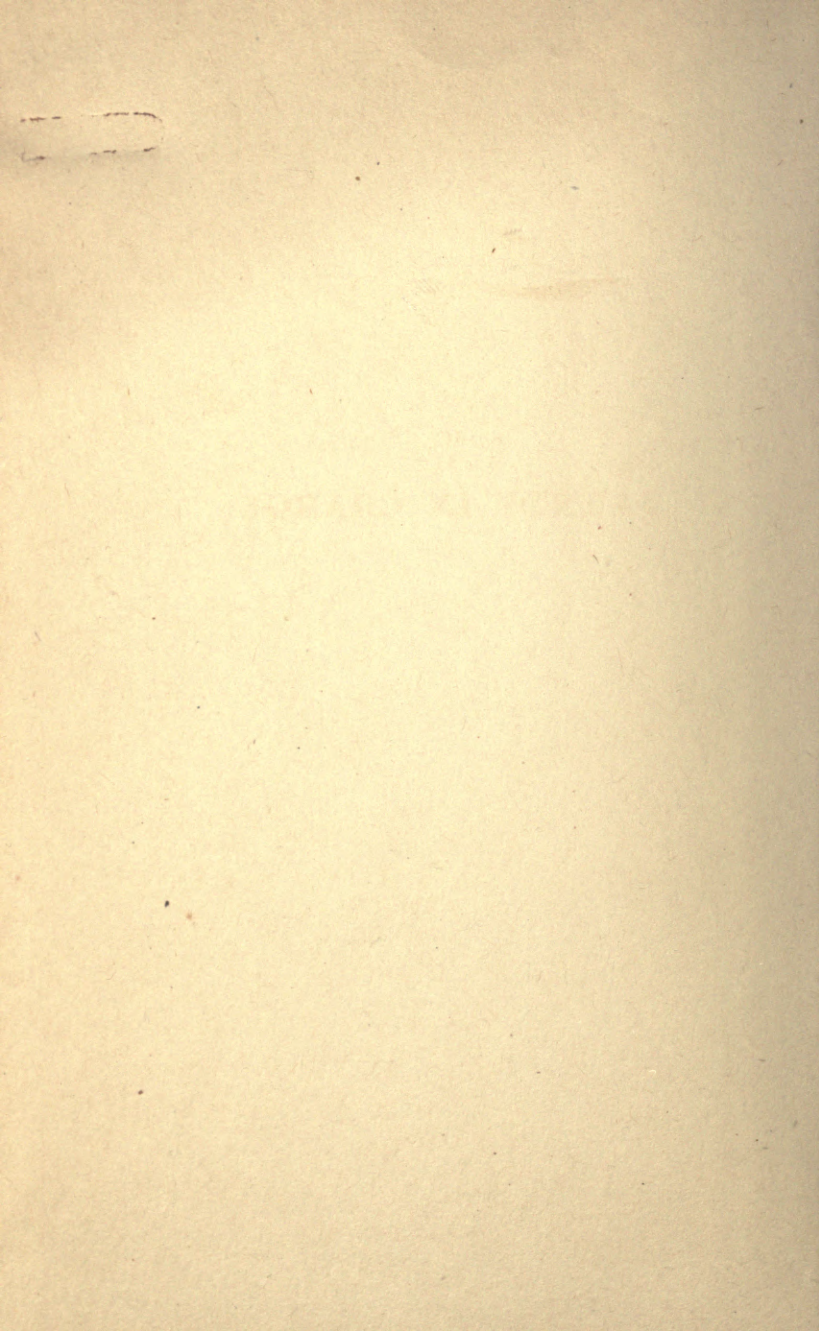
• MRS. GEORGE WEMYSS •





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BY
MRS. GEORGE WEMYSS



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
681 FIFTH AVENUE

PUBLISHED, 1916,
BY
E. P. DUTTON & CO.

Printed in the United States of America

JAUNTY IN CHARGE

I

WHEN old Mr. Lawrence died he left a share of his business to his nephew John Lawrence, and such piece of furniture or picture as his nephew should choose. Now John Lawrence knew well both the furniture and the pictures, and wanted none of them. But it was willed he must make his choice, so he pondered perplexedly.

In one of the armchairs, it was said, the great Duke of Wellington had once sat. In the other—a chair just as old, just as strong, just as spacious—no one had ventured to say the great Napoleon had ever sat. Whereas Jaunty, clerk to old Mr. Lawrence, must often have sat in both.

So John Lawrence chose Jaunty.

The partner of the late Mr. Lawrence pressed a picture upon young John, and young John chose, under compulsion, the portrait of an old man wearing a wig. There was nothing interesting about the picture, except that the wig was so exactly like a wig, but the partner seemed so ready to part with it that John took it. And as he had not where to hang a picture he gave it to a friend about to marry, and straightway the picture ceased to be the portrait of an old man in a wig and became the distinguished ancestor of John's friend.

The partner did not press Jaunty upon John because Jaunty was uncommonly useful. On the other hand, John Lawrence had shown so great a delicacy and niceness in naming what he thought should be his fair share of the busi-

ness, that the partner felt bound, as a gentleman, to throw Jaunty in.

There remained just one chance. He took it, and drawing John aside whispered that long ago Johnson, commonly called Jaunty, had taken—under strong temptation—a sum of money, meaning, of course, to pay it back.

John asked if it were necessary he should hear this, and the partner said he thought so. "I kept him," he added.

"Of course," said John. "What else could you have done?"

The partner hummed and hawed. He had looked for praise. In the young man's voice he found censure.

"Did you raise his salary?" asked John.

"Well, hardly," said the partner, smiling.

"But if he hadn't been able to do with what he had before, was he likely to do . . ."

The partner laid his hand on young John's arm. "It's not the usual method, my dear boy."

"No? . . . Well, it's mine."

John called Jaunty. He came.

"Well, Jaunty, I have my choice of a piece of furniture in the office . . . I have chosen you. Will you come?" And Jaunty said, "Yes, sir, if you still wish it after you have heard . . ."

"I have heard, and I still wish it. There is only one thing to be said . . . there is no sum of money in the world with which I would not trust you."

Even that declaration of faith wasn't enough for John. The whole world had got to trust Jaunty, and he would see that it did. He would take a house in the country, and Jaunty should be churchwarden. Jaunty should hand the plate on Sundays. He should be treasurer of everything that wanted treasuring. "Come, Jaunty, we must talk things over," and they went.

The partner watched their going, and he shook his head. There was nothing of the business man in young John, and he was dangerously impulsive. As a matter of fact in this

he was justified; the whole world had every right to trust Jaunty. Of course he had not taken the money. He had not denied taking it; but that had been in order to shield another, dear to one, dear to him. So . . . but there! it was Jaunty all over, and he made no fuss about it, never thought of himself as a hero, nor made any changes in the Litany to suit his own particular needs. The only thing that hurt him was that Mr. Lawrence should have been led to believe him guilty. But then in forgiving him and trusting him, Mr. Lawrence had shown him a side of human nature he adored, and as the years went by he came to think of himself as much forgiven and much blessed. After all, it is something to awake every morning forgiven.

When Mr. Lawrence and Jaunty left the office, Jaunty asked what he was to be?—in what capacity he was to serve Mr. Lawrence?

“Not such long words, Jaunty, please; you’ll frighten the children.”

Jaunty asked if there were children, and John said the world was full of them. Jaunty knew that. “Yes, but in particular, sir. You have none?”

“No, of course not; but long words become a habit, and by the time I have children you won’t be able to break yourself of it, and my children must be happy. I insist upon that. You mustn’t frighten them. I believe man is born into the world to make children happy. If he fails in that he fails altogether . . .”

“In the meantime, sir?” said Jaunty meekly, believing himself born for better things.

“Pray for their mother, Jaunty.”

“Is she ill?”

“I hope not, I hope not. She may have fallen down and cut her poor little knees, for all I know. On the other hand, it is possible she is too old for that . . . I don’t know; but pray for her.”

“I gather, sir,” said Jaunty, “that at present she is unknown to you—and as pleasant a dream as her children?”

"You have gathered rightly, but for all that she needs your prayers."

At that time Jaunty thought there was no woman in the world who wouldn't be the better for the prayers of an honest man, but he didn't say so.

"Then begging your pardon, sir, I repeat . . . in the meantime?"

"What shall you be? Suppose we say librarian?"

Jaunty was willing enough. So it was arranged, and within the course of a few days he entered the service of Mr. John Lawrence as librarian.

But the books—where were they?

He looked round the room in which lodged Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Lawrence said for all he knew they might still be lying unborn in the brains of their authors; in the publishers' offices, or in the bookshops. Jaunty, knowing better, looked for them on barrows, in side streets.

"Write them yourself," suggested John; but Jaunty shook his head, and he started to make a library after his own heart and entirely to his own taste. He bought books on kites; therefore the sum of money spent was not larger than Mr. Lawrence could well afford, and the subject was one that had interested Jaunty from his earliest boyhood.

Mr. Lawrence had no objection. What kind of a kite, though? The bird, or the thing with a long string tail that wouldn't go up?

"Yes, sir, that kind," said Jaunty (not that he would so have described it).

Then suddenly—to Jaunty everything Mr. Lawrence did was done suddenly and without premeditation—John Lawrence married the loveliest girl he had ever seen. Whether he loved her because she was lovely, or whether she was lovely because he loved her, Jaunty could never determine, but lovely she was.

It was said—not by those in authority—that she had only just left the schoolroom when John Lawrence fell in

love with her. They were wrong. Jaunty knew exactly how it had happened.

She was still in the schoolroom when Mr. Lawrence fell in love with her. She was about to leave it—that was true—and hurriedly, so hurriedly that she ran out of the door straight into the arms of Mr. Lawrence who was coming in at the door. Jaunty's point was that she had not left the schoolroom, and for the sake of argument he stuck to his point.

It was said—by those who were not in a position to judge—that John Lawrence had held her in his arms a second longer than he need have done. But Jaunty denied that. Mr. Lawrence wasn't the man to do such a thing. It was purely accidental. If the accident hadn't happened "it" might never have happened. By "it" Jaunty meant the marriage; but he had to admit that "it" was a happy accident of fortune and different from other marriages, in which he had little faith.

The John Lawrences took a house in the country. They took it for the strangest of reasons—at least Jaunty thought them strange. When he asked if the rooms were good rooms, Mrs. Lawrence said she really didn't know—a wren had built in the creeper on the wall of the house, that's why she had taken it. She loved wrens.

Mr. Lawrence took the house because Mrs. Lawrence loved the wren that had built in the creeper that grew on the wall, and he loved her. He didn't tell Jaunty that was why, but Jaunty knew.

"Was there a view from the windows?" he asked, and Mr. Lawrence said he hadn't looked out.

"You must go alone next time, sir," he said.

"Go alone where?" asked Mr. Lawrence. The very thought was alarming.

"To look at a house," replied Jaunty.

"But we shall never look at another."

"It is taken, absolutely, then?"

It was taken absolutely, and Jaunty owned himself and

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence lucky when he saw the house. The wren had builded wisely, and there was a view from the windows, and the rooms were large.

Although to Jaunty the house seemed large, there wasn't room for both wife and librarian, so Jaunty—to whom, in his office days, it had become second nature to say people were not at home when they most certainly were—became by mutual consent butler to Mr. and Mrs. John Lawrence. "Not a butler, *exactly*, Jaunty," said John. "Confidential butler."

"Most confidential," added Mrs. Lawrence, and she looked at Jaunty with so great a kindness that he became—just Jaunty, pure and simple, and remained it ever after.

There were no three happier people in the world than those three until by a perfectly natural sequence of events they became four. Although by many it was expected, to Jaunty it ever remained a miracle, and the name of the miracle was Pamela. When she was just tall enough to sniff with zest at the rose nearest the ground, on a bush that grew in the garden—Jaunty holding on to the bow of her sash behind—the happy party of four became a radiant community of five. And the name of the fifth was Sally.

Thenceforth Jaunty grew in dignity and decorum. Not only had he one example to set now, but two. Two christening mugs to clean, two porridge spoons to clean; and two babies to imprison, at meal-times, behind the bars of two high chairs.

And so passed happy and uneventful years until Sally began to pray straight to God and not to "peoples." Then Jaunty, being of the "peoples," felt out of it. There was nothing to prevent "peoples" listening, of course, so Jaunty lingered and listened.

On her eighth birthday she prayed, "O God, make bad people good and good people nice," and he wondered at the wisdom of the child who had never been in business.

Ten years later, on her eighteenth birthday, she prayed, "O God, give me romance, and don't let me marry the

curate, with ebony hair-brushes, and without opposition," and the curate in question wondered why Mr. Lawrence, who was known to love his neighbour better than himself, should never be at home to him. Jaunty knew; but not having overheard Sally's prayer, attributed the rout of the curate to no higher power than his own. For by the time Sally was eighteen Jaunty was in charge and had been for eight years—ever since the death of Mrs. Lawrence.

After she died it was said by many in the village that Jaunty took too much upon himself; that it was ridiculous to suppose Mrs. Lawrence would have left her children to the care of a butler, however good and devoted a servant he might be, and however indifferent a butler. But Jaunty affirmed calmly and with determination that as his lady had died she had looked from him to her children, and from her children back to him. So there was nothing more to be said. Unless, of course, Mr. Lawrence chose to say it, and as he was the last person in the world to wound a faithful soul, it was never said—and Jaunty remained in charge.

And why not? He had the face of an Archbishop—a perplexed Archbishop, certainly, but surely all Archbishops have the divine right at times to be perplexed—and he had a soul of pure gold and a mind above suspicion; unless he had good reason to suspect; then had he not suspected he had lacked perspicacity. He was as quick as any Archbishop would have been, or as any one in the village was, to see that Mr. Lawrence alone couldn't bring up two girls, and there was no one else entitled to do it, except Mrs. Lombard, an aunt, who made little effort to exert the authority that Jaunty denied she possessed.

He made mistakes, of course, in ordering the children's clothes. What man deserving of the name would not?

In answer to a letter of his, ordering six yards of Vanilla, striped blue and white, a very well-known and respectable firm wrote:

"MADAM,—With reference to your esteemed order for six yards of Vanilla, striped blue and white, we are unable to procure the exact material, but beg to enclose patterns of Viyella, which we trust may suit your purpose.

"Trusting to be favoured with your valued order, and assuring you at all times of our best services to all commands," etc., etc.

And Jaunty blushed. He had done his best.

He did his best too when he ordered shoes for Pamela. He sent an outline of her foot; but in drawing it he slanted the pencil outwards, and the bootmaker wrote that he had no such size in stock, but could procure the same; and suggested a gentleman's shoe, a light walking shoe. Now Pamela at that time was fifteen, tall and slender, with feet small for her size and exceedingly straight and narrow.

Between her eighth and her eighteenth birthday much happened to Sally. Much that was happy, much that was sad. But all that was sad became as a gentle breeze ruffling still waters compared to the devastating storm that overwhelmed her at her mother's death. The waters closed over her, and the darkness remained throughout all the long days of her eleventh year. She knew she could never be happy again, and no one in the village dared offer her any comfort. Even Jaunty, who did all he could to coax back her smiles, couldn't reassure her, because the desolation was his too. But when the spring came, and everything young began to stir, Sally too, as it were, awakened, and groping in the darkness, she grasped hands with the Infinite. She didn't know it, of course; all she knew was that the world was a happy place after all, and she ran to tell Jaunty so. She bribed him to listen. She would never bother him again, but she was beginning to feel happy. Things were bubbling up inside her. Was it wrong? And Jaunty, rejoicing, said it was right. It was what She would wish.

Jaunty always spoke of Mrs. Lawrence as She and Her, and Sally, recognising that the words were whispered and

spelt in capital letters, didn't mind. But it troubled Pamela. Jaunty troubled her altogether. She saw herself chaperoned by him in the future, and it didn't do. Sally had no such fears. Jaunty was Jaunty, which was explanation enough.

"You understand things so," she said. "Nobody does, like you," and Jaunty's soul sang a psalm of thanksgiving. It was for this moment and other moments he had lived. But the grammar, he couldn't let that pass unchallenged.

Sally was glad she had spoken—even ungrammatically—to Jaunty and that he had understood. It explained so much, that understanding of his. For one thing, his gentleness; for another, his management of her father; his wonderfulness altogether.

"She seems so near, miss," said Jaunty.

"She is, Jaunty, everywhere!" and Sally held out her arms as if they would embrace the whole world.

"Sixteen, you are, miss," he said, measuring her as it were across the wings.

Sally nodded.

"What about your hair?"

"Hair? What about it?"

"Should it be . . .?" Jaunty made a rolling up movement with his hands.

Sally shook her head vehemently.

"If you do—I shall cut it off. Yes, yes, yes!"

"No, miss, never!" Here Jaunty was determined. He had Biblical authority to back him up. He wrote out the passage from St. Paul, in which hair is commended as a woman's glory, and had it pinned that evening on to Sally's pillow.

Where the Scriptures were concerned, Sally was prepared to be led by Jaunty. He had been her instructor since she was so high. "So high" is a standard measure, and every one who has loved a child knows just how high it is.

It was when as an instructor Jaunty had failed most

disastrously that as a butler he had shone most brilliantly. When Sally was six years old he told her one day that she mustn't be afraid of dogs, because dogs were sent by God to take care of little children.

She listened to this with grave interest, then said, "I'm very glad to hear that, because it will give Jesus a rest," and Jaunty became all of a sudden a very busy butler and gave up for the moment the religious instruction of Sally. He had to recover. By her bedtime he imagined himself recovered. He found his mistake when she said very solemnly, "It's no use, Jaunty, praying to Jesus to-night, because Jesus is having a rest, so I must pray to the darlin', kind dogs," and she did.

Sally lived in a village and knew the dangers that beset those who so live. Once when she had been naughty she was told that, when she said her prayers that night, she must tell God she had been naughty.

When asked if she had done it, she said, "No, I haven't, and I don't mean to either."

She was asked, Why not?

"Because," she said, "God will tell Mrs. God, and it will be all over the place."

But now she was sixteen and Jaunty was worrying about her hair. He wasn't sure whether it should be up or down, so he went to find Miss Pamela, who was learned in these matters; and he found her in the hall standing before the fire, and as she stood she thought, and as she thought she pressed a log gently with the toe of her shoe. Then she gave it a sudden kick and the sparks flew upwards. She turned and saw Jaunty.

"Take them, please, Jaunty," she said, pointing with her toe to the cups on the hearthrug, and as he stooped to pick them up she swooped down and picked them up for him. "So sorry, I always forget the creaky hinge in your back."

"It's *the* day to-morrow, miss," he said, straightening himself. "You'll humour your father?"

"Yes, Jaunty dear, it's *the* day to-morrow; but all days are *the* days, and all days we humour father."

"Yes, miss, She would expect it. She always did. She seems so near."

"She is everywhere, Jaunty," and Pamela held out her arms, and he said her sleeves pulled in the armholes, didn't they? And what was she going to do about clothes?

"Clothes, Jaunty! It is possible to get clothes, given a little money—more or less!—a little taste—a profoundly optimistic spirit and a Frenchwoman, by the day—but what about a hundred other things? Do I know how to come into a room—harder still, how to leave it? Can I attain to that social graciousness that exacts everything and gives nothing? Have I the power to make slaves of men, without which no woman's life is worth living? Now, Jaunty, you shall be the French Ambassador—no, the Chinese, he is more ungetatable—more inscrutable. You must smile the part—no, Jaunty, that is no smile—there is nothing behind that I can't read. It says quite plainly that you want to get rid of me—you must look as if you wanted me to stay, and you must get rid of me at once—that's diplomacy."

"Your father wouldn't like you to meet a Chinaman unless he was present," objected Jaunty.

"Well, if you are so particular . . ."

"It's not me, miss, it's your father . . ."

"Very well, Jaunty, you shall be the Brazilian . . ."

"Black or white?" demanded Jaunty sternly.

"Now, Jaunty, no matter his colour. I will come into the room—wait!"

She went out of the room, waited a second, and opening the door, came in. "That's right, Jaunty—you are surprised at my beauty—the mouth less wide open, I think. That's better."

"One moment, miss," said Jaunty. "You fail in the very first essential. It is the duty of a distinguished lady to make one feel at ease. You make me extremely uncom-

fortable—and I won't have it, miss, and neither would your father. You have quite nice ways if you will use them as a lady should, and not go about copying a second-rate actress. I wanted to talk to you about clothes."

"Talk, Jaunty, talk; but please remember, yokes and tucks and sashes and bibs are things of the past; neither is book muslin worn now—nor dimity—nor bombazine. Tippets, too, must be relegated to the storehouse of your memories. Neither can you mention pelisses—nor must you tell me to put on my bonnet, because I shall *not* do it—not for sixty years, at all events."

"You are eighteen, miss," said Jaunty plaintively. The difference between eighteen and seventy-eight seemed immense. Miss Pamela an old lady in a bonnet!

Pamela nodded. She knew it; who better? "Yes, eighteen, and unkissed, unclothed, uncared for," she said, raising her arms in mock despair.

He begged her to say no such thing. She was neither the one nor the other—nor the other—and she laughed and told him he was a ridiculous creature, as indeed he was, and every one knew it; but it was only Pamela who dared say it. Pamela dared much, and she dared it delightfully; but it was Sally the village was anxious about. From the Vicar downwards every one felt it to be his or her pleasant duty to look after her, whereas she was perfectly prepared to look after herself and every one else.

Jaunty dreaded the moment when his young ladies should fall in love. He was prepared for almost any other emergency. He comforted himself by thinking they were much too young to think about such things as love. Poor Jaunty, how little he knew! Sally, it is true, didn't think much about such things, but she was old enough to know that Jimmy Beech was in love with Pamela, and Pamela was too old not to guess it. But they were both wrong. It was Sally Jimmy loved. He was quartered within riding distance of Panslea—not easy riding distance, but riding distance (love is no exact measurer of miles); and

when he had the time, he rode over and spent what was left of the time in waiting for Sally. And while he waited for Sally he looked at Pamela.

Every one looked at Pamela, who had the chance, and having looked once they looked again, and every one looked at her kindly; not so much because they wanted to, as that she wanted them to, and it came to very much the same thing, and that's how the muddle arose. Jimmy looked at Pamela as she wanted him to look at her; but his thoughts were with Sally. How should Pamela know that—or Sally either?

So Sally was perfectly justified in telling her black spaniel that some one was in love with "Aunt" Pamela—and it was a perfectly safe secret. So far as confidences of women went the spaniel was a dark tomb. Where rabbits were concerned he had little reticence and no self-control. But then Sally didn't pretend he was anything but the comfort of her life. He wasn't a well-trained dog, of course; but then her father wasn't a well-trained father; nor was Jaunty a well-trained butler. But of their kinds they were the best in the world.

One day after Jimmy had waited for Sally and had looked at Pamela he went back to Barracks determined to do something—Sally had no business to be wandering about for hours by herself, or Pamela to exist merely to be looked at—and he found a brother officer learning to write Turkish with a wooden pen. It was the very incentive Jimmy wanted. He hated writing a letter; but a pen like this made it something of an adventure. So he took it up and wrote to one Anne Beech. She was his sister, and he loved her beyond everything in the world, with one exception, and the fact that she would accept that qualification without a murmur made him love her all the more, for she understood. A sister who understands knows much.

Anne Beech lived in London, and her dreams were of a cottage in the country where she and Jimmy might some day live—supposing he did not marry (a vain supposition

where brothers are concerned). She talked of her dreams to no one except to a man called Michael Mason, and then only from a sense of duty, because it seemed the kindest way in which to tell him that his dreams could end in nothing but a sad awakening. His dreams too were of a cottage in the country, and the woman who should wait for him at the gate was Anne. But Anne was determined to wait at the gate for Jimmy. It had been a long made promise. Jimmy's cottage must have a trout stream running through the garden. No right-minded man dreams of a cottage without its stream, otherwise his dream would be left high and dry. It was a delightful dream for Anne, but Jimmy took up his wooden pen to write of another dream altogether.

"Anne, darling," he wrote, in brave, black characters, "you always understand—I expect you know already what I am going to say—you have known all along, I am sure—I am in love. It's Sally Lawrence, of course. I can't imagine it being any one else. I can't conceive any one in his right mind thinking of any one else if he had once seen her—that's the worst part of it all! She can't care for me, why should she? But you can come and just talk about me—very diplomatically, of course—say how kind I am to dogs and animals, etc.! Jaunty does all he can, but think of her brought up by Jaunty. She wants some one to look after her frightfully. Pamela is far too pretty to bother about it. She laughs all day . . . and you can't be angry with her. Come and live near Sally! You might just as well as in London—then I should feel sure you would make it all right. There's a cottage leaning up against the village pump. Sally and I have been to see it. She says if the rain-water butt was painted green the whole thing would look quite different. Nobody uses the pump. The roof would come off the cottage if they did. The rent is thirty pounds. Buck up!

"Dear Anne, I've got to serve my time. She's a child. Do come and take care of her for me. Her mother was the

most beautiful thing in the world. She was Sally, lit up. I wonder if you will know what I mean. Sally will be just like her. I want to be the lamplighter."

And Anne bucked up, and she came, and she took the cottage, and the rain-water butt was painted green, and the cottage did look different, and nobody used the pump. But that wasn't the point. Was she looking after Sally? She loved her, of course, and she talked Jimmy by the hour, and nearly always at the end of it all Sally would say, "I will tell Pamela," which wasn't in the least what Anne wanted.

Anne loved the cottage, and when she had loved it more and more every day for six months Jimmy was ordered to India. He went. Anne stayed behind to take care of Sally for him. It was Pamela who cried at his going, but it was Sally who looked to his coming back, and Jimmy felt the pressure for hours of her hand on his.

That's how Anne came to the village, and Sally said rather plaintively, "There *do* seem to be an enormous number of women in the world!" and she was right.

In the village alone they abounded, and that, after all, was her world.

"Pamela says," she added, "that men *can* be so amusing."

There was no denying it, and a few more in the village would have been a help in more ways than one; but there was another woman still to come. Anne Beech didn't know it; but the other woman was coming to look after her. Anne was there to look after Sally. Janet Mason was coming to look after Anne Beech for Michael Mason, and Anne was worth looking after. She had a way with her, a frank smile, and a warm handshake. In addition to these things she had a graceful length of limb and a swinging walk. It was worth going to the window to watch her pass. Those whose windows opened outwards could see her without difficulty. Those whose windows had to be raised and their bodies projected through them in order or disorder to see her, felt it worth the trouble.

II

JUDGED by modest standards, the Lawrences' house was large, and their income, judged by almost any, was small. But that the income could not be so small as Mr. Lawrence would make it out to be was evident to those of the smallest intelligence, because after all things must be paid for, and if they had not been paid for, the village would have heard of it, and Jaunty would have paid, not in money, perhaps.

After the death of Mrs. Lawrence the house seemed to grow larger and the income smaller. When it was suggested to Mr. Lawrence, by various relatives, that he should move into a smaller house, he refused even to think of it. And his children knew why. Their mother had lived in the rooms. The furniture, the books, were as she had left them. If the carpets were old, her feet had trodden them, and in the eyes of her husband and children the ground was sacred ground.

There were more than the husband and children who felt that. There were those of the village, who talked softly in those rooms, and who looked up quickly when a door opened, only to look away again, remembering.

When Sally dyed the worst worn bits of red carpet with beetroot juice, she felt, for the moment, disloyal, until Jaunty, who looked on, holding the beetroot in reserve, reminded her that he had seen her mother do exactly the same thing when it had been less needed.

That comforted Sally, and she dyed away with renewed vigour and greater success. Invention was a necessity to her. She loved contriving.

It showed so plainly in her dress that Lord Bridlington, who had nothing whatever to do with the matter except that he lived on the outskirts of the village, asked Lady

Bridlington if she couldn't do something. Sally's skirts were too short. Lady Bridlington, in her heart of hearts, was probably glad he thought so, but she asked what she could do. She knew, and he knew, or he ought to know, that the Lawrences weren't the kind of people to whom you could offer money, and she supposed it was shortness of money that made the skirts short.

This was as near to a joke as she had ever been, certainly since she had become Lady Bridlington and stately, so she repeated it several times, that nothing might be lost, until Lord Bridlington exclaimed impatiently, "Offer money? Heavens, no!" and he bounced out of the room, shutting the door, not very violently certainly, but on what Sally would have called "the slammy side."

Lady Bridlington waited a moment to give her husband time to recover himself and to remember his position (it was so new that he was not as yet accustomed to it) before she followed him and suggested that a meeting, of a sort, should be called, at the Vicarage, for instance, and that the question of Sally should be kindly discussed—her skirts, her education, her prospects generally. The meeting should consist of those only who were truly devoted to Sally.

Here Lord Bridlington said that the drawing-room at the Vicarage wouldn't hold the people. Why not take the village hall?

Lady Bridlington said it was impossible to obtain secrecy within the walls of a village hall.

The outcome of all this was that Anne Beech accepted a mysteriously worded invitation, and found herself one afternoon in the Vicarage drawing-room, with an album of picture postcards poised on her knee. St. Mark's and the pigeons seemed inevitable—nothing could save her.

Lord and Lady Bridlington were there too, and a few other people of lesser importance, all seated each with an album on his or her knee.

Mr. Masters, the Vicar, came in, and Mrs. Masters col-

lected the albums and laid them in their accustomed order round the mahogany table in the bay window. Then came a pause. What was going to happen? For what purpose had Panslea been gathered together?

The Vicar took up his position on the hearthrug. In a few words he introduced to those who knew him so intimately, Lord Bridlington. In a few well-chosen words he proceeded to sum up Lord Bridlington's character. With tears in his throat he reminded them of Lord Bridlington's kindness (they had all experienced it). He reminded them further of Lord Bridlington's charity to all men—whereupon Lord Bridlington rose and said, after all it wasn't so long ago that he had been just plain Thomas Brown, and no better than the rest of them.

Here Lady Bridlington pulled at his coat tails. He was off the lines. It was as Lord Bridlington he was to speak this afternoon. It was as Lord Bridlington he carried weight, and so on. At this critical moment, through the open French window stepped Sally. It seemed natural enough. No party in Panslea was complete without her. There she stood beside the Vicar, beaming upon every one. Her skirts were short, of course; but then her legs were so pretty, her ankles so fine.

Well, why didn't Lord Bridlington begin? There was whispering; more whispering; and finally Sally was invited by Mrs. Masters to go and see the new chickens. Of course she took the hint and went, followed by the Vicar's wife.

Anne Beech then guessed, as Sally had done, that it was of Sally Lord Bridlington wished to speak. At once she was up in arms. For all the Vicar had said of Lord Bridlington's kindness and his charity to all men, she challenged his right to criticise Sally.

"The subject of our discussion having so delightfully intruded," said Lord Bridlington, "makes it very much easier. How she runs!" he exclaimed softly, looking out of the window. "We want to talk about Sally.—Ah, she *has* cleared the pampas grass!"

It is possible he was here reminded of the shortness of her skirts, because all of a sudden he became very grave.

"It has been said of me—perhaps by some here present—that I have a weakness—well, for a pretty face. It's not true. Well, it is, of course—but I like women—all women—in a perfectly nice way, of course—pretty, or—I like them no more nor no less than any other sensible man—honest enough to admit it. To do otherwise is to go against nature. To repeat then—I like all young people—pretty or—not very pretty."

Here those who could, stole side glances at their reflections in the mirror above the chiffonier, and came to the conclusion, each one of them, that at moments Lord Bridlington might regard them with some small degree of affection—"not very pretty" so exactly described what they saw. No mother could truthfully have said more, no mother would willingly have said less.

Lord Bridlington went on. "Somehow or other I feel it my duty to look after those children—their mother—it's all I can do for her."

There was a decided rustling and shuffling among the audience. It was not only Lord Bridlington who felt he must look after Sally.

"We all feel it," he added, corrected. "We all feel it. Now Sally's education—what does it amount to?"

"May I speak?" asked Anne.

"Do—do," said Lord Bridlington, and he sat down. Lady Bridlington let her hand rest for one moment on his. She approved of him.

Anne rose: the room approved of her; of her appearance. She did the village credit. She was charming to look upon and spoke so much better than Lord Bridlington spoke—at least they were sure she would, because it was as well known in Panslea as elsewhere "that women do—*when they do.*"

"Somehow or other," said Anne quietly, with admirable restraint, "I always think of Sally as born educated. Of

course I have known her a comparatively short time; but it does not take long to know what she is. Upon that I think we are all agreed. To me it seems wonderful what she knows. She can nurse a sick child—can quiet a drunken man—can advise young men and women—wisely, too. She knows a lot about farming. She can ride and drive—and play games—and the whistle pipe. Less well, I admit, the piano. She knows an extraordinary amount of very curious history. She has learnt from her father things not usually considered necessary for girls to know, in Panslea at all events—Latin and Greek—elementary perhaps. More thoroughly she has learnt to play the game. She can amuse a roomful of children on a wet school-treat day. She has addressed a political meeting; made the people listen to a speaker they had come to boo at . . .”

“Poor Donkins,” whispered Lord Bridlington; “quite true, she did!”

“She can do a great many things,” went on Anne, “and she is the kindest thing on God’s earth, and I think one of the prettiest.” She might have added, “And Jimmy thinks so too.” But she didn’t.

“Miss Anne,” said Lord Bridlington, rising and blowing his nose, “you have moved us deeply by your words. May I say one thing? Only one. Sally’s influence is too great, if I may venture to say so, in the village.

“What she tells my tenants to do, they do. What I tell them to do, they do after they have asked her if they should. The rents, for instance! She pays the rents, or gets some one to do it, for tenants I should be glad to get rid of. Makes respectable people of utter scoundrels. Then her petti . . .”

“Bridlington!” said his wife.

“One thing more, only one, my dear. She’s no linguist.”

“Perhaps,” said Anne, “a year abroad would help that. She has an ear for music and an immense friendliness.”

“The very point, Miss Anne, I was making for,” said Lord Bridlington. “Can anything be done that way?”

Just give my agent one year in the village without her and he says he can do wonders."

"Of course," said Anne, "when she is older she will learn discrimination. It is only her love for everything, at present, that overflows. She is at that wonderful age which knows that sinners are only those who have not been loved enough . . ."

"It's enough to make sinners of us all," said Lord Bridlington, looking foolishly affectionate. "I often think," he went on, "what a widow she would make . . . left with a young family to bring up! There's no limit to her intelligence. She could manage a large property—with Blank's help, of course."

There was a pause. Blank was Lord Bridlington's agent. Whose widow did he propose Sally should be? His son's, his delicate eldest son's? Anne got very pink.

"Enough, my dear," whispered Lady Bridlington.

"Yes, dear. . . . Well, my dear friends, the fact is that—Sally knows French indifferently well. The question is, Who shall approach Mr. Lawrence on the subject?"

"Anne Beech, of course," said all with one voice.

Anne promised to approach Mr. Lawrence. Failing Mr. Lawrence, Jaunty must do, and in most cases he did excellently well.

The meeting was considered at an end when a voice said, "Does *Pamela* know French?"

The question was tremulously asked by a little woman who hitherto had not spoken a word. It was a pertinent question and one deserving of consideration.

"She *looks* French," said another little woman who had also remained silent throughout the meeting.

Here the Vicar rose looking stern and pained—he cleared his throat.

"I feel it my duty," he said, "to remind you that there is nothing so delicate, so easily shattered as the reputation of a young, beautiful and motherless girl. . . . Shall we disperse?"

And the two little women who had been silent up to the making of their singularly unfortunate remarks, slunk home without tea.

And Anne turned to the window and looked out. She imagined she succeeded in hiding her amusement, but of course she did not, for a dark laurustinus bush just outside the window made of it an indifferent mirror, which may have made Anne's smile appear larger than it really was. For Anne was ever careful not to smile to the hurt of any one.

"I thought it a compliment to say a woman looked French," said the one silent woman to the other as they walked home.

"In France, dear, it may be," said the other.

When every one was gone, Mrs. Masters, who had found the chickens dull and Sally less welcome than usual, said to her husband, "I was sorry, dear, to miss the meeting. I never think it a good plan to come through the window—but you encouraged Sally to do it—you remember? What was decided at the meeting?"

The Vicar was unable to say. The discussion had been very desultory and somewhat beside the mark. Lord Bridlington had gone too far. He had discussed Sally's peculiar qualifications for widowhood.

"Sally a widow?" exclaimed Mrs. Masters. "I cannot imagine it. The village would be furious."

The Vicar said the village must learn submission, and he smiled kindly. "Then Anne Beech spoke—not altogether relevantly, I thought. We all know what an excellent child Sally is."

"And we've known it longer than Anne Beech."

"Longer, yes," he admitted.

"Who else spoke?"

"Unfortunately, Miss Doe and her sister."

"They spoke? But they are so quiet as a rule."

"They were not noisy to-day."

"What did they say?"

"Well, it appears that they thought Pamela was in need of instruction as well as Sally. It has occurred to me, I must say—and when it was suggested that Sally should be instructed in the French tongue Miss Doe said, 'Does Pamela know French?' There was no harm in the question had not Miss Eleanor Doe put in her word. She said, 'Pamela *looks* French.' There was a pause; of course, the position with regard to those children is peculiar. Panslea, as it were, has undertaken to protect them, to care for them, to shield them from the slightest breath of scandal. I felt the moment had come when I must speak firmly, so I said, 'There is nothing so delicate, so easily shattered, as the reputation of a young, beautiful and motherless girl.'"

"Dear Bryan, how wonderful of you to be able to speak like that, so to the point. What happened?"

"Miss Eleanor, I think, saw what she had done. She and her sister went home. . . ."

"Oh, that was it! I knew I hadn't overestimated the number of buns. I can tell to a bun now!"

It is possible the Vicar was thinking of other things, because he said, 'Yes, my dear; I often wonder if the parish knows what it owes you,' and his wife blushed with pleasure, then generously remembering a woman less fortunate than herself, said:

"I think I shall just walk down and see Miss Eleanor. She mustn't fret. What should I do if you spoke to me like that? Bryan, *does* Pamela look French?"

The Vicar would not commit himself, yet he had twice passed through Paris, so was qualified to express an opinion. Why, wondered Mrs. Masters, should Miss Doe, with her limited knowledge, have ventured to say so?

The Misses Doe lived across the Green, in a small house which was large enough for all their needs. So was their income; at least Miss Eleanor had been heard to say so. Miss Doe never mentioned money, not even taxes. There were those in Panslea who would have liked to know what

income it was precisely that was large enough for Miss Doe and her sister to live upon—not from curiosity, of course, but just from an interest in how the other part of a village lives.

Miss Eleanor would never have gone to the length of mentioning her income if it had not been to explain, as it were, her occupation in life. She said she had enough money to enable her to put to such good use as she was able the small talent God had given her. Whether it was God who gave her the power to paint what she called miniatures was not for Panslea to say. It had enough to do in finding the likeness without trying to trace the finger of God in the painting.

Miss Eleanor painted miniatures of those only who had—as she tenderly expressed it—“passed over.” She was prepared to paint, free of charge, miniatures of those soldier sons who had met their heroic deaths on active service. She made a gentle concession so far as to include soldier sons who had died of certain kinds of fevers, contracted abroad, in bad climates. But those who had met their deaths at polo she could not include. There she drew the line; with tears perhaps, but she drew it.

Babies who had passed away she loved to paint. That all babies had blue eyes, and pink cheeks, and curly hair was a point conceded by most mothers, because how could any one find fault with a gift so gracious? And if the baby had not had curly hair at the time of its premature passing away it must have had—had it lived, and the nurse persevered with the upward turn of the brush—so Miss Eleanor said. She painted too the miniatures of husbands of truly sorrowing widows. With widows she set a time limit; she did not begin to paint for some years, for the widows might marry again and her labour be lost.

More black-edged envelopes were carried by the postman to Miss Eleanor's door than to any other door in Panslea. It gave her a certain distinction in the eyes of the postman, who had been three times a widower. As to

herself, she had found a way of expressing sorrow for those in trouble that she could not so delicately have expressed in words.

When Mrs. Masters arrived at the house she found Miss Eleanor at home, washing her paint brushes. Miss Eleanor showed some confusion on seeing Mrs. Masters and hastened to say she hardly dared to think what the Vicar must have thought of her. Mrs. Masters was quick to explain that it was only because of the very peculiar position Pamela and her sister occupied in Panslea that the Vicar had felt it necessary to speak so strongly. "Now if it had been any other girl—or even Lady Bridlington . . ."

"I am so careful in what I say, as a rule," said Miss Eleanor, "but it will be a lesson for me. I am grateful for that. And a lesson so kindly given . . ."

Mrs. Masters said her husband had felt it very much. "Having to do it, I mean, and you had no tea."

Miss Eleanor blushed and said she had 'lunched well and it was early for tea.

"Yes, but tea is tea, when all's said and done. It was a pity."

Then they talked of other things—of the Lawrences principally—and Mrs. Masters left feeling she had been of some comfort to Miss Eleanor. But halfway home she remembered she had forgotten to implore to be allowed to see the miniatures. Another day must do! And probably it did. But those living in a village must remember the painter who paints in their midst—and no other day does quite so well as to-day; because the light will never again be quite so good.

III

As it happened Jaunty came first to Anne's hand, not Mr. Lawrence.

Anne met him in the village and found him willing enough to talk. He was worried about the young ladies. Miss Pamela was coming out and he didn't know where the clothes were to come from. Anne wondered if it were the moment to suggest Sally going abroad. She ventured it, however—as she had promised—and Jaunty's face broke into a hundred puckers of perplexity. Of course he didn't know so much about Mr. Lawrence's affairs now that Mr. Lawrence had got that roll-top desk—American, they called it! Anne laughed and Jaunty proceeded to explain that when you shut the top the whole thing—every drawer—locked!

Anne said she knew that. Jaunty thought it no laughing matter. He hadn't the same hold over his master that he had had before. It was not Mr. Lawrence's fault. The thing was given by relations and was automatic. Anne said, Why not, when relations themselves were automatic?

Jaunty smiled; the explanation he felt was due to Mr. Lawrence, for he knew well enough that Mr. Lawrence thought that to look after anything implied a want of confidence in those who were already engaged in looking.

It was relations who were worrying Jaunty. They were writing now about Miss Pamela's clothes. If they would do more than complain he wouldn't mind. Why not help practically? He drew from his coat pocket an illustrated catalogue and asked Miss Beech if it were possible Miss Pamela could wear anything in the least like these horrible pictures.

Miss Beech said she thought there were fashions that, adapted, might suit her very well.

"They are not what She wore," said Jaunty. Then in a whisper he told Miss Beech that he had, locked away in a drawer, full instructions; but they would come too late. Anne, not understanding, did not ask from whom the instructions were to come, and Jaunty did not say.

He saw no reason why Miss Beech shouldn't see Mr. Lawrence, but he suggested it should come about quite naturally. An arranged interview Mr. Lawrence hated. The plumber knew that and had caught Mr. Lawrence only that morning in the village outside the post office. The result had been everything the plumber's wife could desire. This was an immense encouragement to Anne.

It came about, the interview, quite naturally, on the high, hard road, Mr. Lawrence on his pony; Anne on hers. Which happy chance robbed the situation of any stiffness there might have been. Because any pauses that might have seemed awkward in the house were filled in the road by the backing into its respective ditch of one or other of the ponies.

A passing car buzzed right through the middle of the money part of the discussion, and when the ponies were restored to order Anne said, "As we were saying, the money in all these things is the difficulty—education is so expensive!" and Anne ran her hunting-crop up and down the pony's mane and the pony shivered with joy, at least it was counted for joy in Panslea.

Mr. Lawrence thought the money was not worth considering, because he had an idea. Now Anne knew that Mr. Lawrence's idea on any subject was not likely to be Lord Bridlington's; but for all that it might be worth hearing. But this idea she was not to hear, for Mr. Lawrence turned his pony round and made off in the direction from which he had come. Anne, knowing both the pony and the rider, could not be sure in which direction the rider had meant to go. But if he had meant to go in that direction, where was he going? And what was he going to do? She determined to wait a moment. If the pony had gone that way

to suit himself, Mr. Lawrence would probably persuade him to turn before they reached the hill. But Mr. Lawrence and the pony dropped over the crest of the hill and disappeared from sight.

Anne turned her pony and went home, wondering as she rode what Mr. Lawrence was going to do.

What Mr. Lawrence was going to do was simple enough and, to himself at all events, most obvious.

If it were necessary that Sally should know French better than he knew it, he was going to get some one who could teach her. If only people would be frank with him and tell him what they thought his children needed he would do his best to give it them. Jaunty was wonderful, but even he failed at times. He lacked imagination and invention; he was in so many ways a woman.

The first thing Mr. Lawrence had to do was to get to the station. He got there. The second thing was to put the pony up. He put it up. The third thing, the easiest of all, if the dullest, was to wait for the train. He found one was due in half an hour. It was in these things he thought himself lucky. He waited. The half-hour passed quickly enough. A commercial traveller willing to talk was found and exclusively engaged for the time being. Now the commercial traveller had never before found a listener possessed of so amazing a curiosity. Rubber heels left most people cold. Not so this man with the twinkling eyes and the ready smile. It was most extraordinary his power of assimilating knowledge. In a few moments he had grasped just what kind of a woman she was who favoured the revolving heel, and why! What kind of man he was who wore the tip only, and why! The half-hour having flown, Mr. Lawrence got into the train close at the rubber heels of his commercial friend and in time London was reached. Mr. Lawrence made straight for a post office and there begged—for one moment—the use of the Post Office Directory.

The girl behind the grille was only too anxious he should

have it for as long as he liked, and was about to offer him what assistance lay within her power to give when he said he had found what he wanted.

Who says manners in post offices are not what they might be? Let any one who says so ask for the Postal Directory as Mr. Lawrence asked for it, and see what happens!

Had he found it? The girl seemed almost sorry.

"Not quite," he said. "Ah! 'Home!'—he *had* found it—Yes, 'Home for Aged Foreign Governesses.'" That was exactly what he had been looking for, and it was to be found at Highbury. He supposed 'buses went that way?

It was as well to make sure. He went out into the street and there he met a small boy carrying a large basket. So he asked him—he stooped to do it—if 'buses went Highbury way?

"'Ighbry wy?" said the small boy, he should just think they did. Why his aunt lived there! But the gentleman must first go to Victoria. It was only a step. He was going there himself. He could show the gentleman the way if he liked. There was nothing the gentleman would like better. The small boy gave his basket a hitch up and Mr. Lawrence taking in the situation at a glance—big basket, small arm—took the basket and carried it, finding it surprisingly weighty. He remarked upon it and the small boy looked knowing at first, then evidently trusting this long-legged gentleman with a kind, far-away face, confided to him the exact nature of the contents of the basket. The gentleman seemed impressed without showing any particular excitement, and said it was quite a valuable basket. The boy remembered that later—to his cost.

By the time Victoria was reached the small boy had found a very soft corner in Mr. Lawrence's heart. It wasn't difficult to find. The youngest child seemed to know the way, and if, in addition to youth, the child had trouble, it had only to follow a track that other little feet had worn. This small boy, it appeared, was troubled. His mother—delicate in some ways—had lately presented him

with twin sisters, an attention he could well have dispensed with. By way of consolation Mr. Lawrence said they would make excellent housemaids later on, and the small boy was ready to agree, so far as the plainer of the two went. For the prettier one—and he admitted it wasn't saying much—he thought shop or office. What did the gentleman think? Mr. Lawrence promised to speak to Jaunty about it.

The small boy seemed to know so much that Mr. Lawrence asked him if, by chance, he knew of a French governess—old and past her work? The boy knew they existed; but they didn't come much his way. He would make inquiries if the gentleman liked? It was surprising how many people met, in the poultry line, so to speak—especially delicate ladies—but they were mostly well-to-do. He thought eggs more likely where elderly French governesses were concerned—not *fresh* eggs, of course.

Here Mr. Lawrence made a mental note. Sally must send fresh eggs to London for elderly French governesses. Jaunty must see to it.

Mr. Lawrence thanked the small boy for promising to make inquiries; in the meantime would he accept a small offering, a token of . . . Mr. Lawrence got no further. The boy's face from pink deepened to a rare rich purple. The sight of such gratitude for a benefit so small hurt Mr. Lawrence so much that, to escape further painful demonstration, he hailed a passing taxi and jumped into it, little knowing that on the edge of the curb he had left an embryo poulterer and fishmonger, whose world had become all of a moment a bottomless pit of blackest despair. The small trusting poulterer had been robbed of his basket, and so cleverly too. The twins had been nothing to this. There was no actual disgrace attached to their appearance—in fact the doctor had gone so far as to congratulate the mother; but the disappearance of twin fowls! The ruin of his whole life stared him in the face. Position—career—character—honour—one pound of butter—and a cream

cheese—all gone at one fell swoop—and he so knowing as to have been worth a rise at the first six months. He could hear his poor mother saying it “acrost the twins” to a sympathetic neighbour. The poor little twins would be carried away on the flood of their mother’s tears after this.

The taxi bore Mr. Lawrence and the basket away, and when the taxi stopped Mr. Lawrence jumped out, overpaid the driver, and began to read with eagerness the legend engraven upon the brass plate on the door of the unhomey-looking house. It ran, “Home for Aged Foreign Governesses. Supported by voluntary contributions.”

He knocked at the door and waited. Some time. Then the door was opened slowly and round it peeped a small girl wearing a cap the size of a walnut shell—and only half of that. Pertly she asked Mr. Lawrence’s business; politely he said he wanted to see a very old lady—if such a thing existed? If she was in bed it didn’t matter. He meant that if she were in bed it would show she was in that state of health in which he hoped to find her. He was involved—but did the small girl understand?

The small girl had never before been credited with the gift of understanding—not even with the power to understand—so she put her tongue in her cheek, blushed, told Mr. Lawrence to “Garn!” and kicked open a door on the left of the passage. Then she asked the gentleman to wait while she called Madame. She had never before been so polite, nor had she ever felt such a fool. She had surprised herself and it is always upsetting to do that. We should at least be able to depend upon ourselves not to be politer than we want to be.

Mr. Lawrence walked into the room and found himself in the very heart of the home for aged governesses. But where was the home? He couldn’t find it in the horsehair-covered sofas and chairs, nor in the linoleum-covered floor, nor in the dusty leaves of an indiarubber plant which stood in a cardboard waste-paper basket. The leaves of the plant were dusted just so far up as the tallest of the most

conscientious of the aged governesses could reach. Perhaps the chairs were too slippery to stand upon. He would try! He was trying, perilously balanced, when the door opened and into the room came a fierce-looking woman. Perhaps she had every right to look fierce. It depended largely on what message the small girl had given and how she had given it. Anyhow the fierce woman cannot have been used to finding a tall Daddy Long Legs standing on her chair, trying to measure his height by a comparatively small indiarubber plant. Mr. Lawrence got down and, apologising to Madame, tried to explain his position, and failing—for the want of a sympathetic listener—said quite simply that he had come to ask if Madame could find him such a thing as an elderly lady—a governess for instance—past work?

If Panslea could have heard him!

Madame folded her arms and, smiling grimly, owned to the guardianship of ten old ladies—elderly ladies—answering to the description. “But none, Monsieur, are lunatics.”

She rose to her extreme height as she made this immense pronouncement and Mr. Lawrence said they need not be that. He wanted a great talker, that was all. Had Madame such a thing?

Most assuredly she had, and the greatest talker was the most bedridden; quite healthy, she was, but partially paralysed—all her strength having gone into her tongue.

Was it by chance a French tongue? asked Mr. Lawrence eagerly—that was the point.

It was Parisian! Immensely cheered, Mr. Lawrence asked if it were possible to see the lady? She seemed so exactly what he wanted.

Madame, narrowing her eyes, said, Did Monsieur not generally get what he wanted? Then she hurriedly added that if it should chance to be the partially-paralysed, partially-bedridden lady’s sofa day, there could be no moral objection.

A sofa day it proved to be and Mr. Lawrence was asked to go up.

He went up and was shown into a very small room, where on a very small sofa lay a very small woman, with a whole world of things in her wonderful eyes.

"Queek, Monsieur," she cried, "ah, is it that my sister is found?"

Mr. Lawrence drew a chair to her sofa-side and sitting down broke to her gently that, so far as he knew, her sister was not found. She might be, of course probably was; but it had not been his great good fortune to have found her. And the poor little Mademoiselle, who could not think for what reason a man should come if he had not found her sister, disappointed and brokenhearted, closed her eyes. It was only then Mr. Lawrence realised how poor a place the room was. It seemed when he came into it full of sunshine.

He looked at Mademoiselle wondering what he could say to comfort this stricken mortal, when the door opened and Madame entered bringing the basket of Monsieur that he had left in the taxi. "It is Monsieur's?" she asked.

"Oui, non, ya, yes, wait! What shall I do?"

"The man waits," said Madame, "while he waits—tick goes the money."

Mr. Lawrence gave Madame two shillings to give the taxi-man as a reward for bringing back a basket which didn't belong to him, and certainly didn't belong to the fare—and yet the fare remembered vaguely the feeling of a basket on his arm; just as at a Christmas party the happy grown-up feels the paper cap on his head long after it is torn and trampled under foot. So the fare placed the basket beside him and turned to Mademoiselle.

"To go back to what I was saying—I am sorry I have not found your dear sister; but what would you say if I told you I had found you a home—in which you can stay, cared for, until your sister is found? Could you leave this?"

He looked round the room. It seemed pathetically pos-

sible that she might be glad to leave it, if an ambulance were procured. Yes, she could leave. There was no difficulty, no real difficulty. Her little bird only could she not leave. The little bird should come? Yes—Mr. Lawrence promised that.

Then he told Mademoiselle of his wife's death, of his children. Of Sally who didn't know French as Panslea thought she should know it.

"Pans—lee?" asked Mademoiselle. "It is perhaps a person?"

"No, it's a village. It consists of many persons, all bent on the same thing—looking after me and my children—whereas Jaunty . . ."

"Jauntee—that too, it is a place?"

"No, that's a person. . . ."

"Panslee—Jauntee . . ." murmured Mademoiselle.

Mr. Lawrence said that was right; if she could master those two it was all that was necessary. But would she come and teach Sally? What after all was there to prevent French being taught equally well from a bed or sofa as from a chair? But there was a difficulty. He admitted it!

The light died out of the eyes of the little Mademoiselle. What if this like all her dreams should end in waking?

"Monsieur?" she whispered.

"Money, Mademoiselle. . . . I am not in a position to offer you what you with your experience have every right to ask. But if you think there are things in life that money cannot buy—then you may find them in a home where . . ."

"Money?" exclaimed Mademoiselle, clasping her thin hands; "what is that to a home, to affection, to a Monsieur with eyes so kind—to a young and beautiful child who will perhaps one day love me and, perhaps, another day, will kiss me."

Here was Mr. Lawrence on safe ground. He assured her that would come at the very beginning of things. It

was a habit of Sally. It was as natural to Sally as sleeping and eating—as natural to Sally as singing was to birds. So in whispers the money difficulty was discussed, until in whispers it died away. It was arranged that so soon as it could be managed Mademoiselle and her little bird should set forth, and Mademoiselle was to promise to talk—talk—talk!

Now it was as natural to Mademoiselle to talk as it was for Sally to kiss, and birds to sing; but now she could say nothing—not even promise to talk in the future. For once in her life she was tongue-tied. The bands of happiness were wound so tightly round her heart that no words could come, and it was from the heart that the words should have come.

Mr. Lawrence went and as he went he shook his shoulders as though he were relieved of a burden, as indeed he was. How easily things could be done if only people would be perfectly natural and say exactly what they wanted. People didn't go the right way to work. Youth was necessarily expensive, but the old could be had for the asking. The pity of it! It was profoundly sad.

Mr. Lawrence was in the hall. "Monsieur, your basket," sang a voice from above, and there on the stairs stood Madame, on her arm the basket. At that same moment there was a violent ring at the doorbell. Mr. Lawrence being nearest the door opened it, felt a sharp pinch, and found his arm in the grasp of a tiny grip. He was looking down into the crimson face of a small boy on the verge of an apoplectic fit. The small boy was accompanied by a young woman flushed with the excitement of defending injured innocence.

There is nothing that so thoroughly enthuses the truly feminine mind as an imaginary injustice perpetrated upon a person quite unknown to her under circumstances of which she knows nothing. Mr. Lawrence recognised feminine enthusiasm running riot even quicker than he recognised the embryo poulterer.

The small boy demanded the immediate return of his basket, and his champion was about to tell Mr. Lawrence what she thought of him when the fire of enthusiasm flickered out. She had met the kindly eyes of Sally's father. Now there are women who know at a glance what kind of a man a man is, and Janet Mason was one of them. It had to do, she said, with a look in the eyes. She found in this man's eyes the look that of all looks was the one she liked best and trusted most, and she knew she had misjudged him.

"You've made a mistake," she said, pulling at the small boy's coat.

Mr. Lawrence said, No, *he* had made the mistake, not the boy.

"She heard you give the address, she did," cried the small boy triumphantly, choking with emotion. "We went wrong, but still she heard it all right."

"I cannot thank her enough," said Mr. Lawrence. "You cannot imagine my feelings when the taxi-man returned with a basket that didn't belong to me, that he swore I had left in the cab, a basket I didn't know existed."

The small boy whistled. That was a bit thick. "And you left it in the cab?" he exclaimed. "My word, those chickens will know their wye abaht town—won't they just?"

Meanwhile the taxi was ticking twopences. Mr. Lawrence suggested they should be paid. The small boy produced the coin Mr. Lawrence had so lately given him, and Mr. Lawrence promptly produced another exactly like it, its very double. Then he said, Why didn't the small boy and his champion take the cab back? The chickens would be late for dinner.

Then it was that the small boy, in a whisper, suggested to his champion looking into the basket.

The champion said it was impossible. She turned her pink face to Mr. Lawrence and implored his forgiveness. He begged her not to do that. Of course the poulterer was

right. It was only business after all. The boy was justified in thinking anything. . . . But when pressed to look the boy drew back. He wouldn't. It was all right! His mistake! No harm meant! Here Madame shut the door. Inside the hall she stood for a moment biting her lip; then she blew her nose and said, "Mon Dieu!"

As he walked away Mr. Lawrence remembered the champion's nice face. Not a pretty face, but fresh and charming! He wondered if there was anything she could have taught Sally; but she was too young. He wished he had asked her name. (He little thought she was coming to Panslea.)

Janet Mason on her part wished she knew his name. It was extraordinary that any man could take a basket without knowing it, and lose it without knowing it. (If she had been to Panslea she wouldn't have been surprised at a little thing like that.) Even her brother, who knew most things and a vast number of men, didn't recognise this one from Janet's description. He agreed that he didn't sound like a man who would steal anything from a child; but women were poor judges of men. . . .

"But if you had seen his eyes," pleaded Janet.

"My dear child, the only man I know answering to the description is John Lawrence. But it couldn't be . . ."

"Why not?" asked Janet, grasping at straws.

"Because if it were, you have left out the most important thing of all. You don't say he adopted the small poulterer, which he most certainly would have done, and you don't say he gave the basket to the first beggar he met, which he more certainly would have done."

Mr. Lawrence may not have done all the things he might have done; but he did what he went to London to do, and that was to get a French governess for Sally.

That's how Mademoiselle came to Panslea, and it was as good a way as any other. She came to look after Sally, and Sally needed it. There was only, besides every one in the village, Jaunty to do it, and Anne Beech. But Anne

was doing it for Jimmy, and all he asked was that Sally should remain unchanged, whereas the whole village was trying to improve her, although every single soul in it, if pressed, would have admitted there was little room for it.

When Mademoiselle arrived at the Lawrences she was put into a bedroom whose windows looked out over the garden and far away to the low blue hills. There were flowers peeping in at the windows—inquisitive red japonicas—to see what sort of a governess she was who had come to teach their sister a strange language. She looked tired, poor thing, and pale, not one of their family, and they called to the white lilies below to come up and look. But the lilies were shy; they couldn't speak any but their own language, and that best at night; so they wouldn't come. They would waft a message by moonlight to their tired sister.

There were flowers on the table at Mademoiselle's bedside, and in her heart a wonderful peace. She closed her eyes because they ached from looking at things so beautiful. She must grow accustomed to them by degrees. When she opened them again they looked upon an old man who stood at the end of the bed. To this she could never grow accustomed.

"Monsieur?" she murmured, frightened. He was struggling with some suppressed emotion, the force of which shook him.

"You . . . vous . . ." she hesitated. The old man took one step forward and said hurriedly, passion urging him on, "You no telly naughty Frenchy things my Miss Sally . . . she know nothing . . . more than the lilies of the field . . . she an angel baby. . . ."

"Mon cher!" ejaculated the amazed Mademoiselle, "what would you? She is an angel child . . . that can I see . . . a beautiful . . . child."

And Jaunty because of the tears in Mademoiselle's eyes was humbled and begged forgiveness. He explained it was only because he was so anxious—Aldershot on one

side—London on the other—and Mr. Lawrence not realising the danger of either.

Mademoiselle realised the old man's distress. It was enough.

"We are friends?" she asked, holding out her hand, and Jaunty in the circumstances felt he must decline the hand; but promised to think about the friendship. He had never yet met a foreigner up and about he could trust; it wasn't likely he would make advances to one in bed, especially as the paralysis was probably assumed for purposes of her own.

It was not only French stories Jaunty feared his young ladies should hear. English stories were dangerous enough. And the man who told the worst of them was a certain friend of Mr. Lawrence, one Jameson by name, who once a year paid a visit to Panslea, and during the visit Jaunty was troubled, although he liked Mr. Jameson well enough. But it was best to be on the safe side and he never left the dining-room when Mr. Jameson was there, and Mr. Jameson knew why. When he arrived to stay, Jaunty would take him to his room, would unpack for him, and would invariably say, "You will be careful, sir?"

"Of course, of course, Jaunty. If you think I'm verging . . . you know, just hand me the bread or something."

And Jaunty would agree.

Then at dinner this would happen. Mr. Jameson would say, "John, did I ever tell you the story of the two men who went duck-shooting?" Pamela would look at Sally, Sally at Pamela; both at Jaunty. Jaunty would hand the bread to Mr. Jameson who would take a slice. The girls would say, "Go on," and Mr. Jameson would exclaim, "Oh, it's nothing; of course you know it," and all would be well until he would say—with his eyes all alight—"Did I ever tell you the story of the children's party?"

"Bread, sir?" Jaunty would say in his ear, and Mr.

Jameson would add another slice to the pile in front of him, saying apologetically—

"Dear, dear, I always forget . . . that is the danger of story-telling . . . one forgets——"

Mr. Lawrence would be quite sure he had never heard the stories; if he had he would like to hear them again.

"My dear John," Mr. Jameson would say, "you told them to me yourself. But there is a really good one. . . ."

"The baker doesn't call again till the day after to-morrow," Jaunty would whisper.

That was bad enough, but French stories told from a bed, when Jaunty could not be present, would be much worse.

That the coming of Mademoiselle was an event in the lives of all in Panslea goes without saying. To many it was an excitement, and was talked of by all for days, by some for days and nights. Lord Bridlington went early to Anne's cottage. This, then, he said, was the result of the meeting. Anne thought the result justified the meeting. She had seen Mademoiselle and approved her dark eyes, her tender, timid smile. Anne had shown her Jimmy's photograph, and Mademoiselle had looked at it long and earnestly, and had said it was such a good face and what a good husband he would some day make, eh? And Anne found Mademoiselle very sympathetic and gifted with a rare perception.

"Of course," said Anne to Lord Bridlington, "French is as easily taught from a bed as from a chair."

"Tch, tch," said he, "you've got that from Lawrence. It's the kind of thing he says, and of course there's truth in it; but the accent? Is it as good lying down? I doubt it. . . . In any case it's not the ordinary way of giving French instruction and we wanted—our object was—to make Sally more conventional than she is. I don't for one moment say that she hasn't a thousand charms other girls don't possess; but she ought to be more like other people than . . . her father is—that's all! Now to let you into a

secret—perhaps it's no secret to you—I should like my boy to marry Sally. My wife is all for the boy marrying what she calls 'well.' My dear, kind wife is no good at knowing the real thing when she sees it. She thinks she has her house full of it every week-end. She never has. She imagines because the Lawrences are poor, that they are nobodies, as we were. Nothing of the sort! I tell her none of her friends will ever walk into church as Mrs. Lawrence walked, or as you do. Yes, I assure you. It's not quite the same thing, of course, but with you it will come! There! I've opened my heart to you. You understand now why I worry about Sally."

When Lord Bridlington was gone down the garden path and had passed through the gate, turning to wave as he went, Anne walked to the mantelpiece on which stood Jimmy's photograph. She moved it and set it down again with care, smiling as she did it.

"Dear old thing!" she said, "they shan't," and Jimmy smiled at her in his happy, confident way, as much as to say that he trusted the jolly old world to go on treating him as it had always treated him.

IV

WHEN it was suggested by those least concerned in the matter that Janet should live with her brother Michael and keep house for him—or rooms, rather—brother Michael, most concerned in the matter, demurred. Janet very naturally asked him why he didn't want his own sister to live with him? Now it was some one else's sister he would have chosen, not his own, and in that was he singular?

"Well, my own sister, it's like this." He lit his pipe and stretching out his long legs over almost the entire floor space of his ridiculously small sitting-room, repeated, "It's like this . . ."

"Like what?" insisted Janet.

Michael pulled at his pipe and thought, choosing his words carefully in consideration of those feelings whose very existence Janet would have denied. She was far too sensible to have feelings.

"It's like this," he ventured at last, "you would always be trying to make me do noble things. You would try to make a man of me—your sort of man. You would love to see me doing strenuous, splendidly uncomfortable, martyrable things. You would like to see me walking home on a wet night to save the shilling I haven't got (so why shouldn't the wretched taxi-driver have it?)—but that's a detail! You would make me marry in order that you might look after my children. They would have adenoids so that you might make paper toys for them during their fretful convalescence. You would choose me a weak, backboneless wife so that in caring for her I might become unselfish—I know you! You would mend my socks. Now I would rather you left them to Mrs. Platt, who has mended them indifferently well for a greater number of years than

I can think of without emotion. I could not deprive her of the honour, besides I have given her a glass egg and a pair of spectacles for the express purpose of sock-darning. She has mislaid the egg, I admit, so it's capital lying idle, as it were. She says in any case it was waste buying them things, because she only darns on Tuesdays. If I hole out on a Wednesday I must wait till the following Tuesday."

Janet meekly said she would darn on any day, and all day if Michael liked, and Michael said she had no sense of humour.

Janet said in that respect it seemed she was unique. Every one she knew had an exquisite sense of humour, at least they said so; it was strange she should be the only person without it. She then asked Michael what she should do? Her life seemed wasted if she couldn't look after him. Michael suggested she might be a real friend to people in distress. She asked what a real friend was. "Think!" he said. And Janet thought and while she thought he dozed, and while he dozed her thoughts concluded on these lines. As there are pears *and* pears, so are there friends and friends. There is the friend who asks for stamps and in poor exchange leaves on one's writing table a pile of pen-nies. There is on the other hand the friend who takes stamps and gives nothing in exchange. That is the real friend who never changes. There is the friend who in exchange gives . . . stamps. Friends of that kind die young or their sisters marry Cabinet Ministers.

"Michael," said Janet, "I believe I've got a sense of humour after all. I've thought of some funny things about friends."

"They *are* funny things, Jane—couldn't help yourself. Try again."

"Shall we review our financial position, then?" she suggested, not without humour if she had but had the sense to see it. It woke him up as nothing else could have done. He emptied his pockets and piled their contents on the

top of his bank book, which happened to be lying on the table.

Carefully Janet drew the book towards her, the green-and-black felt tablecloth with it. That she tidied. A glance inside the book revealed all it knew of balance. Blushing, she closed it, and felt as if she had been listening at a door. She wondered why Michael spent so much and had so little to show for it. Janet's idea of much was little. The woman who lives, from choice, on buns and cocoa, partaken of at odd moments, is always of a saving nature, although she may, in some respects, be of a generous one.

Then Janet hummed and hawed and suggested if her income were put to his it would make enough for two to live comfortably—in a flat—with two servants. . . .

"Janet!" said Michael, putting his hands to his ears.

"Michael," gasped Janet, "what is it?"

"The two servants, I think, but I'm not sure. I thought you were going to say ten—why two?"

"Michael!"

"Yes?"

"You have no ulterior motive in wishing to get rid of me?"

Michael said if by ulterior motive she meant a possible wife—none existed, not even the skeleton of one in the cupboard, but he wanted Janet to enjoy herself. If enjoyment lay in interfering with other people's business, she must go where people had business; there was none on the Stock Exchange at the moment.

"Poor Michael!" said Janet.

"Not at all," said he. "I cannot see you spending your patrimony on clothes, nor can I see you secretary to a canine defence committee."

"Is there such a thing?" she asked, alert. To this Michael paid no attention.

"I cannot imagine you leading a life of luxurious idleness, taking a one-horse brougham by the hour, or a taxi

even! If you lived in the country you couldn't supply your London friends with eggs, because you have no London friends, and if you had, hens wouldn't lay eggs at those times when your London friends most needed them. London people and country hens have never arrived at an understanding, and they never will. And it isn't the fault of the government. You would never order one of your darling chickens to be killed; nor would you net your fruit trees; and that belief of yours in the worm that lies curled in every bud the bullfinch eats simply won't work—in gardens."

"I'm an awful idiot, Michael," said Janet plaintively, and Michael put out his hand. Janet took it and squeezed it.

"Not so hard, Jane; it's this clawing emotion I dread. You must practise a quiet reserve and not behave like an affectionate retriever. It's neither sporting nor is it good manners to give your paw at every odd moment, but you're rather a dear. . . . I'd mow your lawn for you every Sunday morning if you lived in the country," and so ended their talk, as all their talks ended, at least those Janet sought to make serious.

She walked to the window and looked out over a green tub on to the Westminster Square, which gave Michael his interesting address at a very moderate cost. She was staying with him. There was something rather pathetic in the patient back she presented to Michael—a gentle resignation expressed in the long neck, which suggested to him a tall wax candle on the altar of a Roman cathedral, and for some reason or other, besides appealing to his pity, awakened within him the pangs of hunger.

"Let's dine, Jane," he said, and they dined as he loved to dine, in a small Italian restaurant, Soho way.

The change which had been restored to his pocket should pay for the dinner and promised to go so far as to pay for the coffee. If not, Janet would pay for that; but Michael said "No."

Now it is here that Panslea comes in, or rather a bit of it, in the shape of the loveliest girl Janet had ever seen. And on that bit of Panslea her attention was riveted during dinner. Now Michael knew by experience the kind of girl Janet was accustomed to call the loveliest she had ever seen. She had been at school with three of them. So he refused to turn round.

"She hates the man she's with, Michael, or likes him too much."

"Hors d'œuvres, Jane?"

"No. . . . Michael! I believe he's trying to make love to her; of course I may be wrong."

"But not so wrong as he is.—Soup?"

"No." Janet was too busy staring to eat. Michael suggested she should stare less and eat more.

"She's got a face the size of your hand, and eyes as big as teaspoons, and . . ."

"No nose to speak of, I suppose?"

"Please don't joke; it's serious, she's so pretty."

"Oh, only pretty? How quickly she's gone off."

By the end of dinner Michael, exasperated, turned—looked—and turned again quickly. He told Janet to come, to hurry up. And she went without her coffee, which she had been prepared to pay for.

Michael hurried down the stairs before her, and on the landing stepped back to let an old man pass. Then stepping forward he barred the old man's way.

"Jaunty, by all that's wonderful!" he exclaimed, and the old man looked at Michael, but was too breathless to speak, so Michael spoke, and in these strange words—strange to Janet.

"Over there against the wall—you'll take her back?"

The old man said he would take her back.

"You can; you have the authority?"

"Her mother's authority, sir."

Janet couldn't understand the look that came over Michael's face. If it was because the waiter was there de-

manding payment he needn't have minded, the waiter must know he had only forgotten.

"You look so queer, Michael, what's the matter?" she asked, and he said there was nothing the matter, and he was cross all the way home.

As they walked down Shaftesbury Avenue a banana skin thrown from a window above hit his hat, and he didn't know it. Then it struck Janet forcibly—the thought, not the banana skin—that Michael was right: she could never live with a man who didn't know when he was hit by a banana skin. That kind of sense of humour she could never develop. If anything struck her she noticed it at once, and if it struck any one else she laughed—unless it hurt them, of course.

That night Janet dreamed of the girl, and at breakfast next morning told Michael so, and he said, "Here was a case in point—why he couldn't have her to live with him. Breakfast!"

She was very penitent and promised never to mention the girl, besides she wasn't likely ever to see her again.

"I'm not so sure about that," said Michael. "I'm going away to-day. Mrs. Platt must look after you."

But it was Janet who looked after Mrs. Platt, and Mrs. Platt needed both looking after and comforting, because with tears and lamentations she declared her back rooms to be To Let—the German Professor having left without paying—and he so fond of sausages! It was wonderful how they ran up. There was nothing for a kind-hearted woman to do but take the rooms, and as Janet was that if nothing else, she took them, and Mrs. Platt said she should never regret it. Would Michael regret it? That was the question.

However, it was done, and Janet went to the stores and bought a patent teapot, and when Michael came back the next day he had tea out of the teapot, in Janet's own room, and he found the tea excellent; although why the teapot should stand on its head he could not imagine. Un-

less it were from joy, and as Janet looked so absurdly happy there was no reason a teapot shouldn't look absurdly happy too. There are different ways of expressing joy, and certainly no house that wasn't really happy would have a teapot so demonstrative. Janet said it was because the teapot stood that way that the tea was so good. And he couldn't say it wasn't. She asked him if he was surprised about the rooms and he said nothing surprised him—and Janet, remembering the banana skin, believed him.

Next morning Mrs. Platt confided to Janet that she had scraped a whole field of mud—sand, she meant—off Mr. Mason's boots. (It's here some more of Panslea comes in.) Mrs. Platt brought it wrapped in paper to Janet's bedside to prove the truth of her statement. "And it's happened before, miss. When his trousers are turned down, after a day in the country, there are two little rings of sand on the floor, enough to cover the bottom of the canary's cage."

Janet said that was a save, and Mrs. Platt taking no notice of the interruption, said, "That's where he goes, miss."

"Where?" asked Janet.

"Well, not Essex, miss."

"Where then?"

"Surrey—that's what that soil is—sand! He doesn't throw sand in my eyes, that's all. And I hope she's worthy of him, that's all I say."

Janet broke to Michael very gently that she meant to live with him—only so far as he wished, and until he no longer wished it. Of course breakfast was out of the question, she knew that; and even at other meals there was no reason she should talk.

"No reason but one, Jane."

Janet had to talk to some one, so she asked Mrs. Platt if she was a widow, and Mrs. Platt said—in a sense she was. In what particular sense Janet didn't ask. Michael approved her reticence and said he didn't want Mrs. Platt

interfered with. She had never asked him if he had a wife, therefore he had no right to ask her if she had a husband.

"But you haven't," said Janet.

"In a sense, no," and Janet puzzled over that lucid remark for two days, then went out and bought an encyclopædia for a shilling, which didn't help her in the least and only upset her accounts.

Michael became more silent every day. When Janet spoke to him he didn't answer. That was not unusual; but he objected to her turning her newspaper, which was a little unreasonable, because no woman can live on births, deaths and marriages alone—there are always the engagements on the inside.

At last Michael spoke, and he said, "Janet, I'm a beast, but I'm in trouble," which winged words flew straight into her heart, and out shot her hand.

"If I let you into a great secret, Janet, will you keep it?"

"Of course." It was a thing she longed to possess.

"You're a nice dog, Jane, but a badly broken one," and she withdrew her hand.

"Now, Jane—in the country . . ."

"Sandy soil?" she asked, anxious to understand what he was going to say before he said it—a true test, although perhaps not the truest.

"Yes, but why? . . . Anyway, it is! Well, I want some one to look after a girl I care for—well, love, if you insist!"

If anything had insisted, it was Janet's eyes.

"She lives in a village alone." (Save the mark! Imagine any one in Panslea being alone for two minutes together!) "I want you to go and live there—to lodge in the village and just tell me how she is . . . what she does. If she is happy—why? If she is unhappy—why? D'you see?"

Janet didn't see, and when she tried to see by asking a few intelligent questions directly bearing on the subject,

Michael went to sleep. But Janet had great patience. She would knit till he awoke.

Michael in love! She looked at him with awe and reverence. He was such a dear, but could he make love as she imagined men made love—as they make it in books? Would any woman call him “Boy, boy,” and what would he do if she did? Janet blushed for him. Would any woman understand him? Would any woman, not a sister, understand a man who went to sleep whenever he didn’t want to answer a question? What was there about him that a woman could fall in love with, especially that lovely girl who had dined at the restaurant that night? Janet of course loved him for a thousand things he had done for her, and had been to her, since she was a child—and then she was more or less accustomed to him, and that helps so with men. . . .

“Your rooms here, Jane, I’ve let,” said the waking man.

Janet sat up. “My rooms?” she said.

“Yes, to a young man in the Foreign Office. He will be a companion for me and he won’t talk, because at present he is terribly afraid of divulging fearful State secrets. He sleeps, I am told, with his door locked and wears a respirator, as a precaution.”

“Is he going to pay me or you?” asked Janet.

“Mercenary Jane—mercenary Janet,” said Michael, and he slept.

And Janet went on knitting until such time as he should choose to awake and give her Bradshaw information as to how she should reach the station, and from the station how she could get to the village—and where, when there, she should lodge.

“Will there be a bathroom, Michael?”

“My dearest Jane, it’s a low, altogether delightful Queen Anne house—farmhouse. Those delicious windows, you know! The entire front of the house is covered with a magnificent vine.”

"Earwigs, I know," said Janet.

Michael slept again, and while he slept Janet turned the heel of the stocking she was knitting for him—such is woman.

"Does the farmhouse woman know I'm coming?" asked Janet, on the chance.

"She knows, and I have every reason to believe she will be of great service to you—in the moulding of your character, I mean—so you mustn't try to mould hers, see? I found her possessed of a combination of gentleness and grit quite remarkable in one of her station—in fact, she is above station of any kind. If called upon to be Queen to-morrow, she would fill the bill—to perfection; the next day a scullery-maid, she would be the best, most willing scullery-maid that ever scoured pots and pans; moreover, she would be an influence for good in the house. She is, in fact, a jewel of the first water."

"Will she like me?" ventured Janet.

Michael said she already did that.

"How d'you know?"

"She told me so—and she charges nothing for cruets—whatever that may be. So you must eat sparingly of mustard."

"You *do* know what it means then!" said Janet.

Michael slept.

"Michael, you must wake and tell me one thing—the girl is lovely?"

"The girl? Pamela is lovely and Sally is not quite lovely; but much more."

"Is it the lovely one or the much more one?"

But this time Michael slept, and there was no awaking him, so Janet left him to his dreams and she went to hers.

It was Annie Beech Janet was to look after.

The whole village of Panslea was going to be very busy looking after other people's business, and Jaunty thought the whole thing rested on his shoulders.

Poor old Jaunty! His shoulders were rounding beneath

the burden, and he walked much slower than he used to walk, and there were deep lines on his face drawn by the wayward finger of Miss Pamela, so Jaunty thought. There was that dinner in London. He had felt she would be in mischief. He had gone up to London to see. By some miraculous chance, aided by the intuition of Mrs. Lombard's footman, he had found her and had brought her back. If he hadn't brought her back, what had she meant to do?

V

ONE morning at breakfast Mr. Lawrence was reading a letter. It was a thing he rarely did. He got Pamela to do it for him, or Sally, or Jaunty even; but one marked "Private and Immediate" he felt bound to read himself. He read it twice, then told Sally to get up and walk to the window.

"Properly, Sally. There—stand there."

Sally stood. "What's the matter?" she asked.

The matter was the shortness of her skirts. "Your Aunt Venetia says the shortness of your skirts has reached London."

"That's long enough, surely."

"They are too short, she says."

"Bosh!" said Sally, shortening them.

"Wait a moment, darling—you are not a judge—neither perhaps am I."

"Ask Jaunty," suggested Sally.

Her father jumped at it.

"No, Daddy Long Legs, don't be silly. Jaunty's no good. Use your own judgment. If you met me out in the road, walking, how old should you say I was?"

Mr. Lawrence pondered. "Old enough to know better."

"No, seriously, darling."

"I can't be serious, Sally, if you look like that."

Sally made an effort to look otherwise, and her father pronounced her skirts too short. "Why not add a fringe?" he suggested.

"Fringes are such peepy, kinky things," objected Sally.

"Well, why not a strip of those wavy things your dear mother used to make for you when you were babies?"

"Scallops?" said Sally, with marvellous intuition.

Mr. Lawrence supposed so.

No, she wouldn't pass scallops. There were little kick-ups in scallops; Jaunty wouldn't approve.

"Why not—a new frock?"

In a moment Sally was on the arm of his chair, her hand in his pocket.

"No, it's not there; now be good!" said her father.

"The question is, can you? Pamela having been in London!"

"I might. What would it cost? Five pounds?"

"My dear man, how a good woman could take you in? Five shillings, you mean! Why, it's cotton at six-three—five shillings, buttons and all, and Mademoiselle can show me how to make it—bien chic."

"Well, send Jaunty to me after breakfast with my cheque-book."

And after breakfast Jaunty went to the library, cheque-book in hand, and it was he who dipped the pen in the ink, tried the nib on the back of his thumb-nail, and handed the pen to Mr. Lawrence with the injunction not to press. It was Jaunty who blotted the cheque, who subtracted the sum of the newly written cheque from that on the back of the last counterfoil, and it was Jaunty's face that fell. It was Jaunty who said in an aggrieved voice, "You've been writing cheques without me, sir," and Mr. Lawrence admitted it. The corn merchant's bill was "Account Rendered." The horses must be paid for.

"I had been about that, sir; he would have waited until after Miss Pamela . . ."

"No, no, Jaunty—I can't bear this money business. You can't make Miss Pamela more beautiful than she is. I see nothing wrong with her clothes. Nothing!"

"Our eyes are kinder than the eyes of the outside world, sir. If Miss Pamela is to come out, I am here to see it is properly done. I have your permission, sir?"

This subservience was an afterthought, and was something of an apology. Mr. Lawrence recognised the one as

little as he did the other, and gave his permission—only Heaven and Jaunty knew for what.

Then there was the house party to be considered, said Jaunty.

“The house party?” said Mr. Lawrence, puzzled.

Jaunty repeated, “House party.” It was customary, he explained, to take a party to a dance. If not a party—Mr. Lawrence might be spared that—there should at least be two gentlemen.

“Gentlemen?” murmured Mr. Lawrence.

“So called,” said Jaunty, and hastily added that he didn’t mean that—he meant that it was customary to speak of them as gentlemen when used for dancing or dining purposes.

Mr. Lawrence asked where Jaunty got all his social knowledge from; and Jaunty said there were many ladies who wrote on the subject—and in many cases were as ignorant as he was—according to Mrs. Lombard. Then Mr. Lawrence, with a persistence that was foreign to his nature, wanted to know where Jaunty had had the opportunity to talk social etiquette with Mrs. Lombard? And Jaunty said he had taken the opportunity when Miss Pamela had gone to London.

“And you found the books wrong. Poor Jaunty!”

Jaunty said the fashion changed with every season—what was bad form one season was smart the next.

“You astonish me,” said Mr. Lawrence, and Jaunty said he was sorry, but he couldn’t help it, some one had to do it. “The house party, sir? You said you thought two gentlemen would suffice.”

“Did I?”

“You should know, sir.”

Mr. Lawrence pondered. “There’s Mr. Jameson,” he said, after careful deliberation.

Jaunty frowned. It was a question of age. Failing any one younger, Mr. Jameson must do. He had the spontaneous gaiety of youth . . .

"And Professor Forsythe," ventured Mr. Lawrence, emboldened by success.

"Failing any one older," thought Jaunty bitterly, "the Professor must do," but Jaunty was troubled. He feared the gibes of Miss Pamela; but after all, why should she gibe? She must come to it herself one day. Perhaps it would not be at age she would scoff, but at age dancing—a very different thing. But these two gentlemen, if they danced, would dance for the sake of Miss Pamela's mother.

Jaunty knew that. So Mr. Jameson and the Professor were bidden, and they promised to come, for the sake of the child's mother, just as Jaunty had known they would. They were nobly determined to see poor John through this great adventure, of launching on to the troubled waters of life this frail bark.

"I would suggest another word than frail," said Mr. Jameson, and the Professor saw the necessity.

Pamela came back from London radiant. Her aunt had been very kind. She had advised her about clothes, and Pamela had disregarded her advice and had taken that of a young man—who had been attaché in Vienna, so knew. The result was charming. She had had such a merry time. She told Sally everything—except—well, there was nothing to tell about that dinner. Sally had never been to an Italian restaurant, so it wouldn't interest her. She didn't understand macaroni or Italian—besides, Pamela didn't want to talk about it. She was furious with Jaunty. When she came home she ignored him—as a punishment.

It wasn't easy to ignore him. He persisted. She refused to say what she had bought. When he begged her to tell him if she had chosen white for her coming-out ball dress (which of course he knew she must have done), she said she had chosen black. Jaunty smiled; he knew that wasn't true. "The dress is to come?" he asked.

"Yes, Jaunty, by post, and you mustn't call it 'dress.'"

He remembered the book had said that. He didn't

mind, he should call it "dress," and he waited and watched for the box. When it did come, it was so light that he was sure the dress had been stolen on the way. But the postman reassured him. Boxes were much lighter than they used to be, and thefts no commoner. But Jaunty was convinced the dress couldn't be decent. The postman couldn't say one way or the other.

Pamela refused to be questioned or to answer. Jaunty told her she would wrinkle her eyes if she laughed so much. He went to Sally, but she was sworn to secrecy. There remained but Matilda, the old maid.

She would be no comfort to him at a time like this; often had he repented getting her the place.

Then he went to the drawer of which he kept the key, and from a packet of letters tied together he drew the top one. It was addressed to "My Pamela, to be given to her on the evening of her first ball," and Jaunty looked and looked, as if by looking he could read its contents, and at last he replaced it. In any case the dress was bound to be white, and any slight alteration could be made at the last moment. He should give the letter at five o'clock in the afternoon. If it was a matter of flowers he could be up at the Bridlingtons' and back again by dressing. Jaunty could as easily imagine a young lady coming out without maidenhair fern as he could a baby christened without water. Jaunty ventured to mention maidenhair to Matilda and she smiled. She read no books on etiquette, but she knew better than that.

She had no right to smile, thought Jaunty angrily. What was a mistake in ferns compared to the mistake she had made? Had she forgotten that cold, cold night, years ago, when she had come back disgraced to the house of her father? Had she forgotten that her father had opened the door to her and had closed it to her for ever? Out in the snow, what would she have done—she and her baby—if Jaunty hadn't been passing—(he had been to Bridlington to get maidenhair for Mrs. Lawrence to wear)—and hadn't

taken them to the house of a friend, and hadn't paid for their shelter, food and lodging? What if he hadn't told Mrs. Lawrence about Matilda and her baby? What if Mrs. Lawrence hadn't taken—when the poor baby died—the poorer mother in, and made her housemaid?

And why did Matilda in time become maid? Only because, when Mrs. Lawrence died, no one else could comfort Miss Sally. It was only in Matilda's arms that Sally found rest. That was why Matilda had become maid—for no other reason.—Yes, one, and that because Nature had given her arms in which children lay comforted. That was all! It was none of her own doing—purely a matter of form.

Jaunty was jealous of Matilda; but he could swear on his honour that she had never done the young ladies any harm. But why laugh when he said maidenhair fern?

Matilda didn't mean to laugh; but she was surprised that Mr. Jaunty, with his knowledge, should imagine maidenhair in fashion.

"And why shouldn't it be, Matilda?" he asked testily.

"You must ask more than me, Mr. Jaunty," said Matilda. "I know little enough of fashions. If I am ever in the fashion it is because the things have come round, that's all—there's many a thing put by that would be the fashion if it was brought out to the light after . . ."

"Then don't throw away the young ladies' things, Matilda," cautioned Jaunty sharply.

And Matilda asked him if he imagined the young ladies would be in Panslea forty years hence to wear the things? Matilda shook her head. "We shall be lucky if we keep Miss Pamela a twelvemonth."

"*Lucky?*" queried Jaunty.

"Why not?" fired up Matilda. "We have no favourites, Mr. Jaunty."

"Haven't we?" he asked.

Jaunty was upset, and he went about other people's business with a face full of trouble and perplexity, and

Miss Sally danced and sang and wasn't in the least a comfort to any one.

At five o'clock Jaunty gave the sacred letter to Pamela.

When she saw it the colour drained from her cheeks—then her lips—leaving her a white, frightened child. Then her eyes blazed at him and she said he must never do it again, and she thrust the letter into the front of her blouse and she went away and cried bitterly. But that Jaunty didn't know—or any one else either—because Pamela, like the heroine of a novel, could cry without showing it; whereas if Sally cried, all the village knew it, and did not rest till they knew why.

(There were times when Jaunty did not lack invention, say Mr. Lawrence what he would.)

Pamela dressed after dinner. She was a long time about it. Mr. Lawrence waited in the hall, fussing and fuming. With him—wondering at his excitement—were the Professor and Mr. Jameson.

The Professor's hair proclaimed him a man of learning; the position of his tie, under one ear, a man of profound learning. Mr. Jameson's clothes proclaimed him no longer a man of fashion; but that he had long ago been one was evident even to the eyes of Jaunty. But as a house party neither he nor the Professor were of any use. Why couldn't they keep Mr. Lawrence quiet? Jaunty could have done it, but he was waiting to catch the first glimpse of his young lady dressed for her first ball. For this night he had waited years. For this end he had watched over her, guided her, and guarded her. He thought of the many good shoes he had given away because they pinched somewhere, and the knowledge that her feet were beautiful was his reward.

At last he heard voices in the passage above—Miss Pamela's gay, then Miss Sally's vowing Pamela was the loveliest thing ever seen since the beginning of the world, and Jaunty whimpered. There was no one to hear, or to see, or to laugh at his weakness. Sentimental old Jaunty!

At the top of the stairs Pamela appeared. A long white cloak covered her. Down the stairs she came. No queen could have trodden the steps more proudly, so Jaunty thought, who knew little enough of queens and their gait,

"Let me see your dress, miss," he pleaded, "one moment"; and to humour the ridiculous old man she let slip from her shoulders her white cloak, and like foam it rippled at her feet.

Jaunty gasped. Pamela was dressed in black, startling, daring, striking black, from which her neck and shoulders rose white as lilies. "Solomon in all his glory," inaptly quoted Jaunty, and Pamela picked up her cloak, wrapped it round her and laughed, and Sally laughed too.

When the Professor saw Pamela he ceased to be a man of learning, forgetting all he knew in the presence of a perfectly unknown quantity, and became much as other men—at least he supposed so, not knowing that it was at least unusual for men to cry at seeing a beautiful young girl dressed for her first ball. He supposed that they too, brought face to face with an unfathomable innocence, would do as he did. He turned to Jameson and was glad to find him looking just as abashed and foolish as he felt himself.

"A sorry sight it would be," Jameson was thinking, "if young men behaved as he and Forsythe were behaving! Society would become impossible—a vale of tears."

"I congratulate you, John," he said bravely, turning to Mr. Lawrence; "Jaunty, I congratulate you," and Jaunty held himself deserving, until a moment later, stricken to the heart, he saw Pamela step into the carriage. Then and only then did he see the incriminating scarlet shoes. It was the final touch, as Pamela had meant it to be, and it was more than Jaunty could bear.

"Miss Sally," he exclaimed, "what would She say?"

"She?" said Sally, recognising that the word was spelt in capital letters. "She?"

"Yes, miss, She. I gave Miss Pamela Her letter."

"Her letter?" said Sally, shrinking as though Jaunty had struck her. "What letter?"

"The letter—forgive me. Before She went away I asked Her to write Her wishes. How could I know what was right? And if I didn't know, who was to know, with your father so innocent in the ways of the world? I gave the letter to Miss Pamela this afternoon, at five o'clock. It was to say what she was to wear and how she was to behave."

"Don't, don't, don't, Jaunty!" pleaded Sally, stretching out her arms as if to hold him back.

"Is it no comfort to you, miss? I thought it would be," he pleaded, frightened by her vehemence. To Jaunty those letters had lain there, living things, links with another world.

"Have you letters for me?" she whispered, paling, her eyes like stars shining.

"Come," he said, and he went to the old bureau and turning the key in the lock he opened a drawer. There were the packets of letters. He picked up one, untied the ribbon that bound it, and spread the letters fan-shape, holding them like a pack of cards. They were addressed to "My Sally." "Coming Out, Miss Sally," said Jaunty. "Engagement—Wedding—and Afterwards."

The fan was closed and the letters tied up again, and Sally went away and cried her eyes out; not only because the hand that had written the letters could no longer hold hers, but because Pamela had had just such a letter and hadn't cried at all and hadn't told her about it.

Meanwhile the thought of those red shoes was scorching the heart of Jaunty. He must prevent Miss Pamela wearing them, so he went to the stables and saddled the pony and, in the darkness of the night, set forth to the house where those red shoes were dancing their owner to destruction, if not to the devil.

It was Mr. Jameson who found Jaunty standing in the hall. Above the strains of the music he heard him

haranguing a footman, and he went to the rescue of the footman, knowing that Jaunty's anger was no light thing.

"It's only Miss Pamela I want to see," explained Jaunty.

Mr. Jameson asked if any one were ill. Jaunty said no one was ill. But he must see Miss Pamela—for one moment.

Mr. Jameson said she was behaving very well—was dancing every dance—hadn't danced once with the "house party." Was it likely?

"Not in the least," agreed Jaunty testily.

Mr. Jameson said they were there if they were wanted.

Jaunty said he was there and not wanted; but he must see her.

"She's so like her mother, Jaunty," said Mr. Jameson, anxious to appease.

"Never, sir, never! Her mother would never have done it."

"Done what?" asked Mr. Jameson, convinced of the innocence, on all counts, that evening at least, of Pamela.

Jaunty must see her, it was urgent; so Mr. Jameson went to find her, and he found her engaged in breaking the heart of a splendid young man, made for no other purpose than to bear a heart broken by the beauty of Pamela.

He relinquished her grudgingly. Mr. Jameson laid his hand on his arm, and promised she should come back. "It's Jaunty; he must see you," he whispered to Pamela.

Furious with Jaunty, she followed Mr. Jameson, and there, standing in the hall, was the funny old thing. Couldn't he have waited an hour or two longer to hear if she had enjoyed herself?

But he was not concerned with her happiness.

"Well, and what is it?" she asked.

But before she knew what he was doing, he was down on his knees, and in a moment her red shoes were off and her black ones were on, and Jaunty was gone—out into the blackness of the night.

Pamela was missed from the ballroom by several men, and at least one woman. The woman—a very pretty young woman—with a laudable generosity, was anxious to point out to her husband, “Such a pretty girl—really lovely—but rather bad style—such a pity. She’s wearing a black frock and scarlet shoes—there she is!”

The husband looked at Pamela and said, “Women are funny things. She is quite lovely, and her shoes are as black as night. Come, let’s dance, and don’t detract from a pretty girl; you were too recently one yourself.”

The husband had looked at Pamela and had smiled at her in the kindly way in which some men will always smile at something young and lovely, whether their wives like it or not. And a wise wife will like it, and she will make her husband see that what he really smiles at is the memory recalled of her when she was just as young and perhaps as lovely; and he will realise it at once, will be surprised that he hadn’t thought of it before.

Jaunty went off with the red shoes tucked away in his coat pocket, and their close contact warmed his heart, and as he rode he sang snatches of the “Te Deum,” and dwelt on the difficulty of bringing up children.

Early next morning, just before dawn, Sally crept out of bed and sat on the top step of the stairs—listening. Pamela should be home at any minute. A slight noise below and Sally edged nearer the banister and looked through. She could see nothing. But still there were shuffling, quiet, creaky sounds.

“Who’s that?” she asked.

“It’s me, miss—Jaunty.”

“You,” said Sally, relieved. “What are you doing?”

“Miss Pamela should be home.”

“Yes.—Jaunty?”

“Yes, miss.”

“Bags I ask first—you know what?”

“If she enjoyed herself, miss?”

“Yes, don’t you? Mind!”

"She was, miss."

"Was what?"

"Enjoying herself."

"How do you know?"

There was silence. Then Sally spoke. "Jaunty?"

"Yes, miss."

"What have you got on?"

"My Sunday-collection coat."

"That you wear when you hand the plate?"

"Yes, miss."

"Is it suitable, Jaunty?"

"It seems so, miss."

"You feel it a solemn occasion?"

"Very."

"Why are you waiting? Are you worried?"

"A little."

"What about? Tell me!" Sally's face was wedged between the banisters, and she peered down upon the respectable and unhappy Jaunty.

"Sir Henry—you know his reputation, miss? I saw him crossing the hall—in time with the band, at his age! I stood at the door."

"What door?"

"Well, Miss Pamela had forgotten something, so I went . . ."

"Forgotten to say 'Yes, please,' and 'No, thank you,' you wonderful Jaunty?"

"Well, I saw him cross the hall."

"Why shouldn't he? Why does a hen cross a road? I don't see why he shouldn't, if the historic hen did."

"His reputation is not what I care for. Your father wouldn't know—and if he knew he wouldn't believe."

"Bad reputation, Jaunty? But you can't prevent us meeting wicked people, can you?"

"No, miss, but I would make you fear them—that's all I would ask."

"Wicked people are supposed to be fascinating, aren't they?"

"You shouldn't feel that with your father what he is."

"Ah, but then he is different to any one, isn't he? He could be wicked and still remain absolutely good, couldn't he? And so could you, Jaunty. It's the wanting to do bad things that matters. To do them and hate them all the time, that's just painful experience, isn't it?"

"Miss Sally, Miss Sally, where did you learn that?"

She said the little hen had crossed the road on purpose to tell her.

"Here they are, miss," and Jaunty hastened to the hall door and flung it wide. The cool air rushed past him, up the staircase, and Pamela after it. Sally wrapped her dressing-gown round herself and her arms round Pamela, and they danced up the stairs and down the passage and back again.

"Sally, Sally, I can never be the same again—it came quite, quite naturally."

"What did?"

"Flirting. I loved it. I was sad; I was gay; I was heart-broken. I laughed. I nearly cried. A mood to meet every mood! I can do it to perfection. See, Sally . . . this when a man told me his horse had broken its back!" Pamela's great tragic eyes brimmed over with tears.

"Don't, Pamela!" cried Sally. "I can't bear it; but it was no credit to you to cry over that, who wouldn't?"

"Of course, of course, Sally, but you have missed the point. I might have wanted to cry and not been able. Think what a tear can do at the right moment. It's worth thousands of 'I can't tell you how sorry I am.'"

Sally was convinced. Of course it was.

"See, Sally . . . this when a young man didn't see a joke," and Pamela's eyes danced with delight.

"What joke? Tell me, do!"

"Any joke, goose."

"It's better than a theatre," sighed Sally. "Did you tear your frock?"

"What does that matter?"

Sally's eyes widened. How in the space of a few hours had Pamela grown away from her and their circumstances! "My goodness," she thought, "not matter!"

"Come and undo my frock, Sally."

The grey dawn came in at the window, and Sally, instead of undoing Pamela's frock, went to the window and looked out.

"Look at the sky, Pamela."

Pamela came over and looked; then putting her arm round Sally's neck she said, "Darling, funny baby, what's the matter with the sky? It can't help itself dawning—any more than I can help myself yawning."

"Pamela," whispered Sally, "Her letter?" She held out her hand. "Do let me see. Did you take it with you?"

Pamela nodded gravely. She drew the letter from her bodice. She gave it to Sally, and Sally walked away and opened it. She read, "God bless and keep you good, my sweet child." That was all. Jaunty was wrong.

Neither of the girls spoke. Pamela looked at Sally. Sally looked at the letter. A voice spoke to them both. To Sally most distinctly, because she was most ready to listen; was always listening.

"You'll have to be, Pamela," said Sally at last. Pamela nodded.

"I suppose so, but goodness doesn't really appeal to me. I am sorry to say it—but it doesn't. Of course *now* . . ."

"Not Daddy Long Legs and Jaunty's kind?"

Pamela shrugged her shoulders. "Delightful; but I cannot see myself leading their life—it's monastic."

"You're hardly likely to," said Sally.

"You think there are possibilities, then?"

Sally looked at her. "Your eyebrows," she admitted, "are . . ."

"What?"

"Provocative—to say the least of it."

"That's a good word, Sally."

"Yes, I've just discovered it. But, Pamela, I'm talking like this, because if I don't I shall cry. You've got to be good. Think how good She was, and no one ever laughed so much, or was so happy. Good morning, my Pamela. I'm going to bed."

"Not to cry?"

"Who knows?"

"Sally, wait! Men aren't in the least like Jaunty and Daddy Long Legs or the 'house party.' I was so afraid they might be. They are infinitely more amusing—and, Sally, I discovered in London that our bringing up has been absurd and ridiculous. We're children for our ages. Do you realise that we have known no girls—all the women we have known have been dear, good, kind things, leading exemplary lives in this Panslea of ours? Do you realise we have been brought up by two dear, innocent men? You are fourteen at most, I am sixteen . . ."

"Time will put that right," said Sally, stretching her arms over her head, "and I'm so sleepy. I like the way we've been brought up . . ."

She went to her room and, leaning out of her window, she cried:

"Mother, no child ever wanted you so much."

VI

THROUGH the purple haze of budding larches, Janet drove to the home chosen for her by brother Michael. The road which led to it was beautiful and it was wild—at least Janet called it so—and she being so tame should know. She could look away on either side to a very considerable distance and see no houses. She loved expanse. If it suggested loneliness it also held out promise of infinity. She didn't know she liked it for that reason; but she did. She expressed it differently, that was all. She said to herself, "I don't so much mind if I *am* late for tea."

The man who drove invited her to sit at the top end of the wagonette, quite close to his brown-and-white check back, so that he could talk to her as he drove.

Janet sat there and she played noughts and crosses on his broad check back with an imaginary opponent, and for the first time in her life she won. The secret lies, Panslea believes, in beginning first. In this game with the imaginary opponent Janet began first every time, which she had never done in a real game, and she won, which she had never done in a real game.

The unconscious driver gave her much information as he drove, pointing with a lashless whip to hollows where houses lay hidden by trees. There were living in those houses people whom the young lady would like—if they liked her. They didn't call on lodgers as a rule, except on Mrs. Hill's, and as she was a lodger at Mrs. Hill's, it placed her in a different "cattery." Not long ago a lodger at Mrs. Bond's had turned out to be a divorced lady. It gave Panslea a turn. They were more careful now.

Janet hastily remarked upon the lashless whip, and the driver laughed. That was Miss Sally's doing. She paid

for it, though. So much for lashes, same as some folks paid for "wopses."

Janet was immensely interested, and she said they both stung, of course. That fell flat, so she confessed she had never seen Mrs. Hill. The driver found that strange. Had Mrs. Hill seen her? No? That was downright comical, that was, because Mrs. Hill was very particular. Janet hastened to say Mrs. Hill had seen her brother.

The driver pulled up his horse, turned on the box, and asked if it was her brother who was a dark gentleman without an overcoat? And Janet said, Possibly, because he had started with one, but he was on the fair side.

"That's the party," said the driver, and he gave his horse permission to start.

When the horse stopped again, it stopped for good outside the house Michael had described. It was low. It was lovely, and its white-framed windows were as like Queen Anne as windows can be like a woman. The brave vine was there holding the old house up in its arms for every one to see (it had been a tender nurse all these years), and in the doorway stood a little woman, whom Janet instantly loved. And as she walked over the uneven brick floor into the best parlour, she was prepared to give her rooms in Westminster, rent free, to the nervous young diplomat.

"Who is that?" she asked, pointing to a picture hanging on the wall of a little girl.

"That's dear Miss Sally."

"And this?"

"Dear Miss Pamela."

"And this?" asked Janet gently.

"She's gone, miss, but she still seems very near."

"Their mother?" whispered Janet.

"Their mother," whispered Mrs. Hill.

Then turning to the picture of Pamela, Janet said she had seen some one so like her.

"Have you? We never have!" said Mrs. Hill, and Janet

looked at her and they laughed. Yes, Janet would love tea.

While Mrs. Hill went to get the teapot, Janet looked around, examining the many photographs on the walls, and came across one that thrilled her. It was undoubtedly of the man with the kind eyes who had taken—by mistake—the little poulterer's basket.

"And this one?" she asked, when Mrs. Hill came back with the teapot.

"That is Mr. Lawrence, their father. It's just made, miss—the tea."

"I met him in London," said Janet eagerly.

"He *was* in London lately." Mrs. Hill said it in a way that implied that he couldn't very well be in London and not be seen.

"What did he go up for, do you know?"

Mrs. Hill said that was not known. But what he had brought back—or, rather, what had followed him in a day or two, was a partially bedridden French lady. She had come to teach Miss Sally French. Mr. Lawrence could hardly have gone up to London with the exact intention of bringing her back, but that was neither here nor there. The lady was here, however, and was very charming, and spoke French as easily lying down as sitting up—which, after all, was what mattered.

"He had an adventure," said Janet; "he took by mistake—at least he carried a heavy basket for a little boy, and when he parted from the boy he forgot to give him back the basket."

Mrs. Hill said Mr. Lawrence might very easily do that; but the little boy would not be the loser, in the end. "Mrs. Lawrence used to say, 'Mr. Lawrence is unlike any one else in the world—he will never do what other people do; but he will do kinder things, better things, than they do, not always perhaps in the way they think best; but in a better way and a kinder way.'"

"You have known them long?" suggested Janet.

"Many years."

"And you look after them . . ."

"I do what I can—the whole village does what it can; but there's Jaunty."

"Jaunty, Jaunty?" repeated Janet, puzzled. "I know the name."

"He's a great character, and it's an uncommon name."

Janet nodded her head. It was a curious name.—Jaunty? She couldn't place him, and yet she *did* know the name.

Imagine her first Sunday at church—when not only did she see Pamela, who had dined at the restaurant, but Jaunty who had fetched her away. Jaunty presented the plate at Janet's waist-line as he might have presented a pistol at her head, and waited until she had added another sixpence to the one she had already put in. He wasn't going to let a young lady dressed as she was dressed, lodging cheaply enough, too, at Mrs. Hill's, get off with sixpence, when the church wanted hot-water pipes and a hundred other things. It was the first time in her life that Janet had suffered the penalty of being well dressed.

From the moment Mrs. Hill pulled back the curtains in Janet's room, Janet became one of the people of Panslea—a devoted admirer of Mrs. Hill, and the happy recipient of many confidences. Her questioning eyes found a ready answer in Sally's busy little tongue—not that Sally was indiscreet.

The farmhouse door stood wide when Janet came down that first morning; if the singing of birds had been a stronger lure than the smell of coffee she would have walked down the flagged path and out into this new and happy world. But Janet was a ready breakfaster, so she breakfasted. Then she walked down the flagged path and out into her new world. She lifted her arms as a bird does its wings, but she had no wish to fly, for she saw in the distance a girl sketching. Now Janet had often been to the Tate Gallery, so she went up to the girl,

stood beside her, half closed her eyes, and put her head on one side, in the manner assumed by those who would show themselves artistic, and said, "Do you paint what you see?"

"What d'you think?" asked the girl.

"People don't always—I mean they don't want to—they improve upon what they see."

"I improve," said the girl, pointing her brush between her lips. "I have often wondered what it was I did."

"People see greens so differently, don't they?" asked Janet, unabashed. Anne Beech admitted it—besides, they *were* different.

"Some people see them purple," said Janet; then she added, "Shall you put a cow in the foreground? One hardly likes to put a bull, because of Paul Potter—but he was oils."

"It might be dangerous, even in water-colour; besides, it's Mrs. Baker's cabbage patch—the foreground, I mean. It is difficult."

"They're easiest lying down," said Janet kindly. (A cow lying down—a horse going over a bridge; she knew those two ways out.)

"That's not the difficulty," said Anne. "It's a blue reindeer I see so distinctly—not a red cow; and if I put in any reindeer, no matter what colour, no one will believe it was there."

"It isn't," said Janet. "Are you laughing at me?"

Anne said she hardly knew her well enough. Janet said she might if she liked, adding, "I expect you are very clever."

"It's very kind of you," said Anne.

"Not at all," said Janet, "every one is so kind—at least Mrs. Hill is, and I was wondering if every one in Panslea . . ."

Anne asked her if she had met the Lawrences. Janet said she had met no one; but she had heard about them from Mrs. Hill.

"Have you met Jaunty?" asked Anne. "Of course not, you said you hadn't met any one."

Janet hastened to say in a way she had met Jaunty.

"Seen him, I suppose?"

Janet said she thought she had; but she was careful not to be too certain. To confess a foreknowledge of Jaunty had already been counted presumption on her part. Her right had been questioned.

"He's a great character, is Jaunty; he keeps us all in great order. The Lawrences he entirely rules," said Anne.

"Don't they mind?"

"They mind nothing that makes any one happy."

"And it makes him happy?" asked Janet.

Anne Beech said she wouldn't go as far as to say that; then, packing up her paints, she suggested they should go up the village, where they would be bound to meet Sally Lawrence. Then she remembered that Sally would be at her French lesson. "Would you like to see her at her French lesson?"

Janet said she would; but she didn't know the Lawrences, whereupon her new friend said every one knew them. It wasn't in the least necessary to be introduced, or to leave cards, or to do any of those absurdly conventional things.

"But how would you know people's names?" asked Janet.

"Oh, I see. Well, I will call upon you properly tomorrow. I will leave my card—don't ask my name now, it would be so dreadfully simple."

They walked through the village, and outside an old red house—with white-framed windows, seven in a row above; and below, three on each side of the hall door—Janet's friend stopped.

"This is the Lawrences' house," she said, opening a high iron gate. "It is a delightful house and quite close to the road, which enables the village to learn French if it will—even in these days of cheap education it is an opportunity. Listen!"

Janet listened, and she heard some one singing Chopin's funeral march.

"Come round here," said Anne. Janet followed, keeping close to the wall of the house. As they approached the back of the house the voice grew louder. It was without doubt singing French verbs.

"There's Sally."

Janet looked. "Higher, higher, right up; look!" said Anne.

And Janet looked up, and there on the top of a ladder which leaned against the sill of a bedroom window was perched a girl, singing her French verbs to the sparrow in the ivy, to the swallow in the eave, and to a mademoiselle in bed; but that Janet did not know until she was told.

"The French governess is partially bedridden," explained Anne.

"I know," said Janet eagerly. "Mr. Lawrence found her in London and I was there."

"When he found her?"

"Well, not exactly, but when the basket was . . . found."

"Then the Lawrences won't surprise you. Sally, rightly enough, says she can't sit in a bedroom to do lessons, so that is her plan."

Janet said it seemed a very good one—only she would never have thought of singing French verbs to a funeral march. "They don't seem to go together, although French verbs are miserable things at the best of times."

"All the Lawrences' plans turn out all right in the end," said Anne, "although in their beginnings they are quaint. Now we mustn't disturb lessons."

So Janet went home to think, and next day she wrote to Michael, and this is what she wrote:

"Michael, dear, you have opened to me the gates of Paradise. But the angel within the gates, so far as I have seen, is Anne Beech. I wish you had fallen in love with her. I met her yesterday without discovering her name. I could have asked it, of

course; but the mystery surrounding her was charming in itself. I was so afraid it might be dispelled by a name. However, to-day I went out, and when I came in I found upon my sitting-room table a leaf, under a small stone. I took up the leaf. It was a beech leaf, very, very new, very, very green, and deliciously transparent. Mrs. Hill came in while I was examining it, and said Miss Beech had called and had left her card. I asked where it was, and Mrs. Hill said I held it. Miss Beech never left any other card. I asked what she did in winter, and Mrs. Hill laughed. Was that being what you call matter of fact? On my part I mean? Is that the sort of thing that makes you sleepy?

"I said I would call upon Miss Beech, and Mrs. Hill said no moment could be better than the present, because Miss Beech had said she was going straight home. I told Mrs. Hill I should probably not need a card, but might I pick one from the garden wall as I passed? She said I might. It is all childish but delightful, and I believe the spirit of Sally Lawrence is in the air. She does her French lessons from the top of a ladder, which rests against the sill of Mademoiselle's bedroom window, and the Mademoiselle is what Mr. Lawrence went to London for. I haven't yet met *the* one . . . Michael, dear old Michael, I am told she is lovely. Well, I found Miss Beech in, and I laid my card on the table, and I said, 'That's my name,' and she said, 'Plaster'? and when I told her 'Mason,' she said of course she knew. 'So you are Mr. Mason's sister? and what made you come here?'

"She lifted a tulip from a kinky lead, and put it into another—not bettering its position in the least. I dared not tell her about P. L., so I said I wasn't very strong. She looked at me. 'How curious,' she said. 'I have never seen any one look so blatantly healthy. However, one can't go by appearances. Tell me some more truths.'

"I could say nothing after that except that I must go. She asked, Why? Had I many engagements? I smiled. Anne, slim as a daffodil, in her green sheaf-life frock, stood before me, and putting out her hand drew me down on to the sofa. 'Dear Miss Mason,' she said, 'I wish I knew why you have come to Panslea. If it is to get colour into those pink cheeks, and flesh on those well-covered bones, stay and be happy, but you must take Anne Beech as you find her, and not try to make her out something else. If you want romance you must concentrate on Pamela Lawrence. She went to her first dance the other night, and the postman has been weighed down with letters for her—all proposals—ever since.'

"Have I said it too suddenly, dear Michael? It is all rather puzzling. I shouldn't put off proposing too long if you really mean it, and, Michael dear, I find I spend so little here, that I might make marriage possible for you, see? I hope this letter will convey something to you beyond my love—I am a very, ridiculously happy Janet—if it weren't for your trouble."

To which letter, by return, came an angry answer from Michael, rather angry! He told Janet she was a dear, silly goose, and not to breathe a word about P.L. to any one. He wouldn't for the world let any one think he was in love with her. Least of all Anne Beech—and he begged to say a daffodil didn't in the least describe Anne—she was anything but yellow.

Janet read Michael's letter and folded it up. "The dear old thing," she said, "he can wake up when he likes," and of course he could. But Janet didn't know why her letter in particular should have aroused him.

There are men in this world of ours who, being good men and kind, rather than hurt a woman they love—who bores them—will feign sleep at those moments when they feel at the end of their tether. Living with Janet had become a kind of rest-cure—enforced—for Michael.

Janet was sure she felt the atmosphere of Panslea enveloping her, as it were, in its soft folds. The influence of Mrs. Lawrence was a tangible thing, a living, forceful thing. So real a thing was it that Janet, at the end of two or three days, had come to the conclusion that it was because of that influence—and only because of it—that Miss Eleanor Doe had not eloped with Lord Bridlington—Mr. Masters with Anne Beech. Panslea without that influence would have been as wicked a place as it was possible for a small village to be. It was very wonderful! Janet ventured to say so to Anne, anxious to show that she too was imbued with the spirit of the place. She said how good it had made Miss Doe.

Anne admitted the wonderfulness of the influence—no

one was more alive to it than she was—but she ventured to say that Miss Eleanor was naturally very good.

“Of course—good!” admitted Janet, “but not so good as she is now.”

Anne challenged Janet to fit a wickedness to Miss Eleanor’s soul. And Janet couldn’t find anything that fitted. She dared not suggest elopement. It was much too large and loose a thing.

“Of course,” said Anne, “the influence is this—that if I feel cross and impatient I stop and think before I show it. ‘What would She have. . . .’”

“Oh! that?” said Janet.

“Yes, just that, and it’s quite enough—to make a difference, I mean. Then we don’t gossip maliciously—we don’t ascribe motives. . . .”

“But it could—the influence, I mean—do more if it were necessary,” argued Janet.

“Yes, it could do anything; but somehow or other it is the small sins which hinder us in the paths of Panslea—bigger sins, not necessarily worse sins—don’t seem to come our way.”

But Janet clung to her belief in the power of the influence, and she looked at Miss Eleanor in church with tender misunderstanding. There were so many wickednesses she might have committed.

Dear little Miss Eleanor was as incapable as was a garden rake of committing deliberate sin. Her thoughts were beautiful—her aspirations divine—her dreams of another world. She thanked God every day of her life for the innumerable blessings showered upon her, and had no idea that her goodness was of them all the most rare.

She looked forward in her dreams to shaking hands with Leonardo da Vinci in Heaven, but didn’t know what she should say to Torrigiano for breaking Michael Angelo’s nose. He might so easily have injured the precious eyesight. Perhaps she would understand Torrigiano’s motive and that would make it easier. She was slow to blame

genius. She hoped and prayed that Sir Joshua Reynolds would not be deaf in Heaven, because she wanted to thank him so much for his beautiful work, and she was very shy, and would like to say it as softly as possible. She wanted very much to ask Romney if Lady Hamilton were really as beautiful as he had painted her—but of course the subject was one she could hardly mention. Perhaps he would say something first. The controversy must pain him. She was quite certain her Heaven would be peopled by great painters, and perhaps one of them would tell her how to make a winding path lie down and not stand up like a corkscrew on end. Perhaps perspective in Heaven would be called by an easier name. Perhaps in Heaven there would be none. In that way would it indeed be Heaven to the timid painter.

All these gentle thoughts occupied Miss Eleanor's mind in church, and Janet guessed none of them.

VII

PAMELA was very busy. She had so many letters to answer (Sally really believed, or said she believed, them to be proposals) that Sally had to amuse herself, which she was perfectly well able to do.

It was at this time that she started her armchair business.

It happened in this wise. She was told that old Simon Saxton, up the church lane, was so crippled with rheumatism that he couldn't go to bed, that all night he sat up, leaning his poor dear old head on the table, and that so he slept or tried to sleep. When Sally heard this she rested ill in her soft pillows, and she tossed about in her comfortable bed. Her cheeks burned, and her heart thumped with sympathy for poor old Simon. And when Sally sympathised she didn't end with feeling sorry, she must be up and doing. It was early to get up, five o'clock in the morning, but she must. She could bear it no longer. Pamela was tired out refusing people; Jaunty was inaccessible; Matilda didn't count; and Daddy Long Legs she never disturbed unless it were absolutely necessary.

Mademoiselle alone remained. She was so often in bed that night and day could be but names to her, therefore to Mademoiselle's room went Sally. She awakened her gently and said she had something very important to say, so Mademoiselle must listen. She was going to say it in her best French, introducing all yesterday's idioms.

She said it in French, and Mademoiselle, half awake, wondered at the fluency of this strange language, but despaired of understanding it. Not so much that Sally's French was bad as that Mademoiselle's sleep had been deep. All she gathered was that some one in the village

had left his head on the table. Now to Mademoiselle it was quite evident that it was some one else who must have cut off the head and afterwards have put it on the table—naturally leaving it there, for who would wish to keep it? It was a horrible story, not fit for Sally to hear. But Sally had heard it, repeated it, and was gone. Mademoiselle herself was helpless, and Jaunty was in the bachelor's wing—not within call—so the position was a hopeless one.

A murder! It was horrible. Mademoiselle rang her bell, and of course nothing happened because the bell rang into a passage and every one in the house was in bed, except Sally, and she had gone for a walk in order to think out a plan. When she came in, dew-drenched, she found Jaunty distracted, and her father, dictionary in hand, trying to make out an extraordinary story Mademoiselle was trying to tell. Sally, of course, cleared it all up and put the dictionary back in its proper place, under the bird-cage, from whence it had come, and sent Jaunty about his business and her breakfast.

After breakfast she started for Bridlington Park. She reached it without adventure, for which she was sorry. She rang the bell with determination, and waited. When the door opened she asked of the footman who opened it if Lord Bridlington was at home, and when the footman said his lordship was not at home, Sally said, "Then say please I should like to see him." And the footman went and Sally stood in the great hall, which had been built neither for nor by Bridlingtons, and wondered what it would be like to live there. She knew Lord Bridlington was as proud of the house as Lady Bridlington was of a name that was written one way and pronounced another. Lord Bridlington she knew had infinitely preferred himself as Thomas Brown and his wife as Mrs. Thomas Brown. By that name he had thought of her and loved her for many years. Neither he nor she would ever get accustomed to the change. Sally knew as every one in the village knew that the change had been made on account of the little

Browns—so Lady Bridlington always said, adding that it was not as if Thomas had sought the honour, disregarding the fact that for years she had prayed for a peerage for him, using other influence as well. Sally wondered why plain Thomas Brown should have been made a peer of the realm because he had made and patented a hard red brick that wouldn't wear out. The paths up to the cottages on the Bridlington estate were laid with these hard red bricks, which no Bridlington foot would ever wear. Sally loved the old bricks that were trodden into unevenness by the feet of generations passed by. She loved the little cups in them that held the clear water after a spring shower. They made, if nothing else, such nice drinking-places for the birds, such delightful things for children either to jump over, or step into, as suited their particular dispositions.

"His lordship would see Miss Lawrence."

Miss Lawrence knew it and she stepped gaily into the library, and sat herself down on a sofa. The more she sat the deeper she sank, and she asked Lord Bridlington if he liked cushions. He said he hated them. He always threw them out of a chair. It was a bad beginning. Sally jumped up and slipping behind Lord Bridlington, who stood, sank into the chair the cushion of which was still rising, released from the pressure he had brought to bear upon it.

"But this is a surprisingly comfortable chair," she said, grieved and shocked that he should lie so lightly.

He said it was; what he had meant was that he hated loose cushions. A comfortable chair, of course, was a necessity.

"Done!" cried Sally, springing up. "You've said it and you've never gone back on your word—you've said so dozens of times. Say it again, after me; about the arm-chair, I mean."

She stood, a slip of a thing, before Lord Bridlington, and he looking at her felt just plain Thomas Brown again and radiant at that.

She stood with her finger lifted while he repeated after her the words, "A comfortable armchair is a necessity."

He repeated the words glibly enough because the child was a pretty child, and a happy child, and because she didn't treat him in the least as he was afraid he ought to be treated. Then begging him to sit down in his comfortable chair, she told him the story of Simon Saxton, and it lost nothing in the telling. The listener was more interested in the fact that Sally's eyes could fill with tears and not brim over than in the story itself. The story wasn't pretty.

Then Sally, who was as pretty as a fairy story with a happy ending, drew a small table up to his chair, begged him to lay his head upon it and try to imagine himself spending the night like that—just like that! Obediently he bent his head, and Sally with the aid of the flat side of a large paper knife pressed it lower and lower till it rested on the table. Thomas Brown felt a fool, but a happy one, until the door opened and Lady Bridlington came in. Then it was all folly and no happiness.

"Bridlington!" she exclaimed, "what is the matter?" And Sally explained. It was difficult until she came to the Simon Saxton part of the story. There was nothing ridiculous about that, and Lady Bridlington's eyes were full of tears when Sally had done.

"Thomas, this must not be," she said.

"It must not be, my dear, but what does Sally propose?"

Sally proposed—only this! That every poor old man in the village, every poor old woman, should have a comfortable armchair, a good, well-stuffed, comfortable armchair. "Say it again after me, please. No? Well, it's a fact—a well-known fact—that most rheumatism and all sciatica come from uncomfortable chairs.

Lord Bridlington longed to dispute that point. It was one of the absurd statements Lawrence loved to make. He knew that! Lawrence's theories exasperated him. If dear Mrs. Lawrence hadn't died he would never have . . .

"How many chairs d'you want?" he asked, stifling the spirit of controversy.

Sally proposed ten.

"Ten at how much?"

"I would propose ten at seven guineas—ten to begin with."

"*Would* you?"

Sally nodded.

"Seventy guineas?"

"What's that?" asked Sally, with a fine scorn, who in the whole course of her life had never possessed a tenth of that sum for her very own.

"You propose that I should give ten armchairs at seven guineas a-piece?"

Sally nodded again.

"Well, *I* don't."

Sally's face expressed the disappointment she felt.

"Are you surprised, Sally?"

"Hardly," said Sally, sitting in an attitude of deepest dejection, "a man who makes the hardest things in the world, who *tries* to make them hard, who is rewarded for making them hard, naturally becomes hard himself. Kind cottage mothers like the brick paths worn by the feet of their children. They like, when they grow old, to see the feet of their big sons, soldier sons, covering three of the little depressions into which the same feet used to stumble when they were tiny. They don't ask for hard, hard bricks."

"Sally, I'm not so hard as you think. I have another plan to propose. They shall have the chairs if you, from time to time, will inspect them. See that they are kept clean and the springs in order."

"You darling!" said Sally. Then she did a thing from which neither Thomas Brown nor Bridlington ever recovered. She set upon the brow of Bridlington the seal of old age. The kiss was the kiss of a happy child bestowed upon a man too old to count.

"Now to business," said Lord Bridlington, aged in a moment.

To get the chairs from one cottage to another there must be a cart, which Sally must drive. It must be painted a brilliant green, that was her idea; with red wheels, also her idea. It was Bridlington's that her name should be painted on the cart and so save the tax.

Sally laughed. She didn't realise that Bridlington was so rich because he and his father before him had thought of little savings all their lives. Nor did she know that her father was poor because his father and his grandfathers before him had never saved anything.

But she got her chairs and her cart (she had her pony), and she became inspector of armchairs for the people of Panslea. It kept her occupied while Pamela danced and flirted.

Bridlington had stipulated that the chairs should be lent only to deserving people. Sally demurred. The bones of the bad were just as sharp as the bones of the good. Rheumatic pains attacked alike both the righteous and the evil-doer. But Bridlington held that the lot of the evil-doer must not be softened.

"Bricks, bricks, bricks," murmured Sally; and when, as inspector, she came to inquire into cases nearly every one of them proved deserving. The only ones a little less deserving than the others were those of the really fat people—which would have been strange, if it had not been that Sally was her father's daughter.

VIII

PAMELA talked a good deal of London and what she had done there, but not so much as Sally had expected. Therefore at ten o'clock of every night she sat on Pamela's bed awaiting confidences, although not forcing them. She talked gaily of things—things from which she could easily switch off at a moment's notice. At last Pamela told her something to which she attached tremendous importance, and from Mrs. Masters' goloshes she switched off at once on to the man rather different from other men, whom Pamela had met one night out at dinner.

Yes, Sally knew the sort; women nearly always married him. She shifted her position on Pamela's bed to one of the greatest comfort, anticipating a lengthy stay.

"How do you know the sort?" asked Pamela, resenting Sally's eyes which danced to the accompaniment of her laughter.

"Instinct," said Sally. "Go on. Did you ask him by chance if he knew this dear Panslea of ours?"

Pamela admitted it, and Sally was glad. It showed for all her gaiety that Pamela did love her father, her home, and Jaunty. It was about Jaunty, by the way, she particularly wanted to speak. The man different from other men said he knew of Panslea, and as he said it he laughed. He added, Didn't two very pretty girls live there—brought up by a butler?

"What did you say then, Pamela?" asked Sally, and Pamela said she corrected him gently. The girls weren't pretty—exactly; and the butler wasn't a butler—exactly. Then the M.D.F.O.M. asked if their father was a real father, and Pamela vowed she said he wasn't. That he was a story-book father; a fairy story-book father—that

there wasn't another like him in the world, and he wasn't in the least proper. But the question of Jaunty? What was that? Sally wanted to know. Pamela said, Would she promise not to jump? Sally promised, although a spring bed was a temptation.

"Well, don't," she said, and Sally promised.

Pamela was going to tell her in one moment, but first of all she must do up Sally's hair to see what she would look like when she in her turn came to sit next a man different from other men, and Sally with her hair wound round her head looked like a ridiculously delicious baby, ready for her bath.

"Now proceed," she said, nodding her top-heavy head.

"Well, my child, it's this—don't jump!" Pamela laid a restraining hand on Sally's knee. "Do you think Jaunty is a poor relation of ours?"

"No, why on earth?" exclaimed Sally.

"Because—I don't know—he's such a dear and such a bad butler, isn't he? Just the sort of butler a relation of Daddy Long Legs would be—most frightfully willing and anxious to give satisfaction."

"But why do you want to know now?" asked Sally.

"Because this man—I may have to tell him everything—and suppose, just suppose, I had to say Jaunty was . . ."

"Would he mind?"

"Who, Jaunty?"

"No, the man."

"He would. He's very conventional. He isn't like other people, he has no badly off relations at all."

"He would mind Jaunty being . . ."

"Of course!"

Sally was wondering what sort of a relation Jaunty could be. "We aren't in the least like him," she said, gazing at Pamela.

"Only in ways, perhaps," admitted Pamela; "an uncle he might have been, by marriage. One can amass the quaintest relations that way."

"He's poor, of course," said Sally, "but I'm sure he's not a relation, he approves so frightfully."

"Of us?" asked Pamela.

Sally nodded.

"If we gave a dinner-party, would he approve of that?" asked Pamela.

"We shouldn't dare!" gasped Sally. There were limits to Jaunty's affection.

"We do dare. So think about it; go to bed and think."

Sally went to bed promising to consider the menu. Sally considering a menu! The absurdity of it, when bread and butter and brown sugar was the food she loved best, and always had, when her father and Pamela were out to lunch, which was not often.

Pamela lay in bed and considered the menu. The menu itself presented no difficulties. She knew several by heart. She had dined at restaurants; at many friends' houses. She had learnt by short experience how surprising a thing a dinner could be. Bad where you might expect it good. Good where you were certain it would be bad. A menu was one thing; Serena's culinary efforts another.

Then flashed upon Pamela the thought of Mademoiselle! A Frenchwoman in bed must be better than an Englishwoman up—ten times better.

It was nearly eleven o'clock. The clock on the staircase had just struck two, which meant that it was seventeen minutes to eleven. It was quite early. Mademoiselle must be interviewed. It took a second only for Pamela to slip her arms into her dressing-gown and her feet into her slippers, and along the passage she padded. Opening Mademoiselle's door softly she peeped in—and there was Mademoiselle sleeping peacefully in the beam of moonlight that lay across her bed. She was smiling. She might be dreaming of cooking. Pamela was sure she must be. So she laid her hand gently on the little white hand that lay on the quilt, and murmured very distinctly, "Omelette." And sure enough Mademoiselle stirred and said

very softly, but very distinctly, "Aux pointes d'asperges."

Pamela committed that to memory and said very softly, very distinctly, "Entrée."

"Come in," said Mademoiselle, opening her eyes. "Mon enfant!" she exclaimed. There was an immense tenderness expressed in her voice; so much so that Pamela said, "Ce n'est pas Salade . . . c'est moi. Pomme à la . . ."

By that time Mademoiselle was awake and she smiled her Pamela smile, which was, if not quite her best, quite good enough and quite as good as Pamela deserved.

"Mademoiselle, I am in love," explained this apparition bathed in moonlight, her eyes shining like stars set in the heavens.

"In love!" ejaculated Mademoiselle, as if it were a thing unthought-of, whereas she and Sally had gone so far as to discuss, not only love, but its cloaks and habits, shoes and silk stockings—a trousseau in fact.

"Pour le moment," added Pamela, "and he is coming down to see how I grow in my own garden, and Serena can't cook."

Mademoiselle admitted it. She would never have said so because of her love for Mr. Lawrence. If le bon Dieu had given him the digestion of an ostrich it was not for her to complain. She would not have said anything, even now, if Pamela had not herself said it.

Pamela knew that. "But you, Mademoiselle, are a Frenchwoman, and all Frenchwomen . . ."

Mademoiselle raised a hand in protest.

"Yes, I know," said Pamela, "but one Frenchwoman in bed is worth two Englishwomen in the kitchen—Pascal thought it. You yourself suggested Omelette aux pointes d'asperges. You were dreaming of it, and if you dream of it you can certainly cook it. The stuff our dreams are made of—you know! Some one says that."

It was strange, Mademoiselle had thought it was of Sally she had been dreaming.

"Non, non," said Pamela emphatically, "of Salade . . .

je vous assure," and Mademoiselle gave in as every one did when Pamela willed it so. By twelve o'clock it was arranged that on the day of the dinner Mademoiselle's sofa should be placed in the kitchen, or anywhere most convenient, and on her lap she should make an omelette, mix sauces, and so repay Mr. Lawrence something of all he had done for her.

Pamela went to bed and to sleep. Not so Mademoiselle. She was in bed; but she could not sleep. She had put all her eggs into one omelette.

The dinner was arranged. Serena pacified; there remained Jaunty to cajole. He took it better than Pamela expected, except when help was suggested. There he was firm. If it must be done, he could do it alone. But Pamela was as firmly determined that the coachman must be there, if only behind the scenes. And if there should be jelly—which there wouldn't be—he mustn't say "Whoa!" to it because it had been said by Sidney Smith's coachman. So it would be plagiarism if Jaunty allowed it. He must make that clearly understood.

"But if he's behind the scenes and there is no jelly?" said Jaunty, seeking an escape.

"It would still be plagiarism, worse than ever, if there wasn't a jelly. It's a saying that has been said once and for all. Lots of sayings can be said, and are said, hundreds of times by hundreds of different people, but not this one."

Jaunty determined to say nothing about it. To begin with, he didn't quite know what plagiarism meant. It wasn't a word used when he was in business. There was another word used then, which he used now. It was as expressive now as it had been then, and had lost nothing from want of use. He had forgotten the very excellent sound of it. He said it twice, and would have said it again had he been so minded. But the relief he sought was his at the second saying, so he left it at that.

Mr. Lawrence made no objection whatever when the din-

ner was suggested. He would have been as willing to welcome twenty guests as one. He didn't know any difficulty existed. He didn't know Serena wasn't a good cook; he knew she was a most excellent woman. She came for less money because she had a wooden leg, not because she was a bad cook. The leg!—what did that matter, except the loss to herself? The sympathy he felt for her, and every one felt for her, must be a gain.

What troubled him was that Pamela should care for any man not her father. How had she grown up without his knowing it? It meant that time was passing quickly, and yet, judging by the wound that was slow to heal, time stood still.

What if Pamela married? Who was there to tell her things, to warn her? To guard her against sorrow and disappointment?

If she should come to him he could tell her of nothing but joy and happiness, warn her against nothing but the awful separation that might come when she and the one she loved were most happy. And that he hadn't the heart to do, knowing too well the anguish.

Yet his relations had hinted to him that he wasn't doing his duty in not warning Pamela and Sally—against what?

What could he warn Sally against? She was a happy, a wonderful child. Why should he suggest evil? Living as she did in the village, with sorrow at her very gates, she knew sin and wickedness existed; but from the lips of mothers she heard that it was seldom meant. From the lips of wives, that bad men were only bad because they were unfortunate. No husband, hardly, was intentionally bad, given a fair chance. And Sally, looking into the worn faces of the women who pleaded for the best in their bad men, drew her own wise conclusions. And putting two and two together she made a sandwich of her little world. If there was sin, on either side, quite close to it there was also goodness. What wiser than this could Mr. Lawrence teach Sally?

He said something of this kind to the children's aunt, and she said, "You and your children are content then to live in a fairyland?"

"While we are still young!" pleaded Mr. Lawrence, with a twinkle in his eyes, and the aunt gave him up in despair.

To the fairyland was coming a prince. Whether he would trample down the rose-hedge that bounded the fairyland on all sides remained to be seen. He might step over it gracefully without brushing the petals from the blooms. There was the chance that he might not, a chance suggested so persistently by Aunt Venetia, that poor Mr. Lawrence determined to warn Pamela and Sally of dangers.

Their aunt held him responsible if he didn't.

So up to Sally's room he went one night. Sally was in bed. That was bad enough. It was difficult to be serious with Sally in bed. But worse still Pamela was there too. Side by side they sat, looking like two babies in a perambulator. Under their lashes Pamela's eyes laughed at him.

He was much too serious, much too frightened, to notice that. He pulled up a chair to the side of the bed next Sally. He felt safer there.

"Darling old Daddy Long Legs," she said, looking at him with immense friendliness, "what is it? What is it?"

He held out his hand, and in it she placed the end of her long pigtail. It made an excellent "pretence paintbrush," and from the time Sally's pigtail had been long enough to play the part, Mr. Lawrence had pretended to paint her face with it. It was a dear old game, and here was Sally with her face all screwed up ready. But Mr. Lawrence was in no merry mood to-night. Very seriously he said, "I want to warn you, my darlings."

Sally rounded her eyes. Pamela narrowed hers. Sally told him he was doing it beautifully. She felt religious and squiggly all down her back. It was a hopeless position. He looked from Pamela to Sally, from Sally to Pamela. Then came nobly Sally to the rescue.

"Is it about motors—round the Yellow Hammer hill?" she suggested, "the dangerous corner, perhaps?"

"Yes, darling, they are—tarring the road."

"Thank you for telling us, darling," said Sally gravely. "We will keep clean and unspotted by the—tar. Good-night, you dear old blessing," and Mr. Lawrence went feeling smaller and taller and clumsier than he had ever felt in his life before, and that was saying a good deal. The lightness of Sally's touch had put him to shame.

"Sally!" exclaimed Pamela, when their father had gone.

"We must keep clean, Pamela, souls and bodies, minds and frocks—that's all the darling wanted to say and couldn't. I'm not surprised mother loved him so much—but how he needs her. Now go to your own bed and let me sleep."

Pamela went to her bed, and poor Daddy Long Legs went down stairs and into the room which was always empty, and, sitting down in his chair, he thought back through the years that seemed but yesterdays. His wife—the mother of his children—how easily he conjured up the radiance of her beauty! How distinctly he heard her voice—her laughter. How clearly he saw her playing with her first baby, the miraculous Pamela. Then singing to Sally, less of a miracle perhaps, but even more wonderful, for she was younger and smaller and more absurdly like her father. Her father had disputed that. It was their mother he had looked for in his children—then, as now. In little ways it was Pamela now who reminded him most of her mother, in the movements of her hands, in the manner of her talking. But in Sally it was her tenderness, her honesty, her happiness that he found the likeness most striking, most strongly developed.

Jaunty, distrusting these reveries by night, stole into the library, and seeing Mr. Lawrence deep in thought, as he had suspected, began to search for something, fidgeting among the books and papers, a habit of his he knew Mr. Lawrence detested.

"What is it, Jaunty? It's not there."

"Your slippers, sir."

"You won't find them inside a book—the puppy probably! We must get rid of that puppy, Jaunty."

"By the time we have persuaded some one to give it a kind home, sir, it will no longer be a puppy. Time mends the ways of puppies. But your slippers, sir; you are not by chance wearing them?"

Of course he was. It was one of the things Aunt Venetia most deeply deplored. "If his wife had lived," she often said, "it would never have happened."

Jaunty having found the slippers on the feet of his master, where he had known them to be, stayed to talk, and left Mr. Lawrence reading the paper. "Anything better than thoughts, even politics," said Jaunty to himself as he went away. "A man without a wife, the less he dwells on it the better."

"I have warned the children," said Mr. Lawrence to a friend he met in the village. "It's a difficult task for a father."

"It's a beautiful task, I am sure, or you would make it so," murmured the friend in whom he chanced to confide.

"Dear things," said their father. "It is difficult to believe that the children we have watched and loved since they were babies need know of the existence of sin. Since we have known them we have learnt so much more than we ever knew of things that are good and lovely, that sin seems to have become less of a reality. For a man with daughters surely it has less power than it ever had—I mean . . ."

And the one in whom he chanced to confide blew her nose, and said something about Mr. Lawrence being a dear man and unlike the rest of the world of men, and Mr. Lawrence taking fright at that—for all his simplicity he was alive to certain dangers—disappeared round the first corner, and the one in whom he had chanced to confide,

or chosen to confide (it would be a disputed point in Panslea), put up her umbrella and walked away. There was no sun and it wasn't raining; but there are more reasons than two for using an umbrella.

IX

"You will meet him yourself, miss," said Jaunty to Pamela, who thought not. It would look a little too eager.

"Shall I?" suggested Sally. And Jaunty demurred. In the circumstances he knew the best thing that could happen was that Miss Pamela should marry, and he was quite willing she should go all the way to meet the man who was coming down for the night, and for whom soufflés and omelettes must be made. No soufflé could rise higher than the hope in Jaunty's heart, for ever since that night in the restaurant at Soho he had seen a vague danger looming in the distance.

He had no control over Miss Pamela, never had had if he would but own it—whereas Miss Sally was another thing altogether.

But wouldn't a drive alone with Miss Sally, in her beautiful cart, distract the gentleman from his allegiance to the elder sister? It seemed to Jaunty inevitable.

But Pamela said Sally must go if she liked, and Sally liked extremely.

So she harnessed, or caused to be harnessed, her fat pony to the inspector's cart, and off she went. There was an armchair home for repairs. Sally suspected violence, not on the part of the invalided old woman to whom the chair had been so lately loaned, but on the parts of her grandchildren who had used it as a happy playground, for youth loves springs.

However, the chair was there, and Sally took it for the august visitor to sit upon. What more of state could he desire? The chair was covered in red.

It was a lovely day, a lovely day of June. Just the kind of sweet-scented day Sally loved. From Josephsöfat's

point of view, the day was too hot for its hours, and he personally saw no reason to hurry. So between the hedges, deep down in a leafy lane, Josephsofat, hugged by two stout shafts, walked. He ignored the cart he drew, although he loved the girl, who sat in the chair, that stood in the cart, and was pleased to imagine she drove him. That the chair had a broken spring was no affair of his, although he would have known better than to ask a visitor of distinction to sit upon it.

Josephsofat was cross, and Sally knew it. So she didn't draw his attention to the heavens above, although if she had done so, he would have admitted gratitude to the intrepid young branches overhead, who in reaching from one side of the lane to shake hands with branches on the other, made in their impetuosity a welcome shade overhead for wayfarers such as he. Wayfarers so fat!

Josephsofat whenever he was so minded tugged at the grasses on the banks at either side of the lane. "Darling, go on," urged Sally, "you are not in exactly an official position to-day; but you must hurry up for all that. Aunt Pamela has a lover, and if he doesn't propose before three o'clock the shade will be off the lawn, and Aunt Pamela never does what Jaunty wants her to do when it's hot—hurry up!"

Seeing the sense in this, having no particular use for Aunt Pamela, Josephsofat hurried up, and for a few minutes his little shoes made busy, thudding sounds on the sandy, rutty road; then repenting him of his effort he slowed down.

The cart he drew was just what Sally had planned it should be. It was of the kind costers drive in their dreams. It was painted bright green, with red wheels, and on one of the shafts, which so tightly hugged Josephsofat, was written in neat lettering, for all who walked that side to read, "S. Lawrence, Inspector of Springs and Stuffings." To Sally there was nothing unusual either in herself, her cart, or her pony.

To Arnold Monk they were so unusual, all three of them, that the sight of them took his breath away.

Then he saw the armchair, or rather realised its existence, for it was only when Sally asked him to step up and sit in it that he really noticed it. Sally begged him to sit to the left—gently—the spring was going to be mended; in fact, she had no right to use the chair for private purposes, but as it was in Pamela's good cause . . .

"Cause?" asked Arnold, stepping gingerly on to the iron step which gave under his weight. Sally hadn't meant cause. Was there luggage?

Of course there was. He had come for the night.

Sally knew that. She only wanted to know what kind of a box or bag it was, because the old carrier would fetch it. At least he used to be a carrier, and he would still bring the wrong box if he got the chance. But he was a dear old thing and was very sorry when he did.

"And if it doesn't come?" said Arnold, "the luggage?"

"Oh, it will, somehow or other. But the old man must be given the chance."

"Ready?" asked Sally, seating herself on the shaft at his feet. And off they went, or rather Josephsofat went. "How delicious of him!" said Sally.

"What's delicious of him?" asked Arnold.

"Why, to go!"

"Doesn't he always?"

"Well no, not always. You wouldn't expect him to, would you?"

"Yes, of course."

"Would you? And what about his individuality?"

"What about it?"

"Are you not modern in your ideas of bringing up children?"

Arnold Monk said he had had nothing to do with the bringing up of children.

"How far is it?" he asked of this child who had plainly not been brought up in the way he thought she should go.

Sally said it depended. He asked on what? On the individuality of the fat pony?

She said on how they went. They could go by the common. If they went over the common they must walk, because the way was steep and the sand was deep and Josephsofat was old and independent and cross. Walking presented distinct alleviations to Arnold Monk, and he chose the common way.

Now a man in love may drive with the woman of his choice for many a mile suffering a considerable discomfort, but it takes a man more deeply in love than man has ever been to stand looking ridiculous—or, for the matter of that, to sit looking ridiculous—and Arnold Monk wasn't even in love with Sally when he started. How could he be, when she asked him to drive along a country road, much frequented, seated in a red armchair? Arnold was nothing if not conventional.

His conventionality, at times, took the form of unconventionality, if unconventionality happened to be the fashion of the moment. But it must be of the right kind, practised by the right people. So he thought for the first mile of the drive with Sally. For exactly seventeen hundred and sixty yards he disliked her. But during the next mile or so these feelings of righteous indignation—for so he felt them to be—gave way to those of a very definite tenderness. He began to long to do things for this charmingly attractive child: to guard her from danger, to warn her, principally against unscrupulous men who might take advantage of her innocent naïveté. What if a man less scrupulous than himself drove, as he was driving, with Sally leaning against his knees—*almost*? The thought was sacrilege. He loved the little brown fingers that held the reins, the thin knuckles, the slender wrists. He wondered he had never considered the possibility of a younger sister such as this. Pamela had spoken of her, but a younger sister than Pamela had suggested to his imagination some one just a little less pretty, with eyes a little rounder,

cheeks a little pinker, and ways far less engaging. And why? From something Pamela had said. She had made gentle fun of Sally, just as she had done of Jaunty.

Arnold gazed down on the top of Sally's hat. It had seen better and sunnier days. It was burnt, the brim was bent down where it was not supposed to bend, and the ribbon that encircled the crown had once been blue. But he found the hat charming. As to the face beneath it, he had thought it, a minute ago, when it was turned to his, the loveliest thing he had ever seen. Of course it wasn't; but the day was a day in June, and everything was the loveliest any one had ever seen; from the blue of the unclouded sky to the wild rose that blushed in the hedge.

And God meant it so. He means it so every June day of every year, and what was Arnold that he should pit himself against his Maker?

And as to the Jauntys of this world they must be more than ordinarily careful in June—that's all.

So Arnold went on thinking Sally the loveliest thing he had ever seen, and he would have enjoyed it if he hadn't come down to propose to Pamela—and Pamela knew it. And Sally possibly knew it too. It spoilt the drive.

He wondered what she was thinking of. If he had asked her and she had answered truthfully she would have said of her bridesmaid's frock. It would be the first—except for cotton ones—she had had for ages. There was no frock of Pamela's into which any one would dare to force her on such an occasion. Not even Jaunty with his power of contrivance would dare to do it.

But Arnold didn't offer Sally a penny for her thoughts, so she kept them for a rainy day. She asked him instead of what he was thinking? And if he had answered truthfully he would have said, Of her. But he didn't. He said he was thinking of luncheon, and no thought could have distressed her more. She was hoping he didn't mind what he ate; although she had to admit he didn't look in the least like it.

They came to the common and Sally got down. So did Arnold.

"We are very badly off," she said, as they walked. Arnold tried to make light of the subject, which jarred a little, and he said he knew how comfortable a thing was poverty in some circumstances.

Sally said her home was heavenly, but it wasn't, she imagined, extraordinarily comfortable. "We have coffee after luncheon—and the *Times*. It's such a companion to the Daddy Long Legs; he carries it about under his arm, and it's always there for reference. Then—what was I saying?—oh, yes! we have ponies to ride; but we never have a new Bradshaw or—new carpets: it seems all right. Only our Aunt Venetia won't come to stay. You see, now that She has gone we don't quite know—what we should have . . ."

"She?" asked Arnold, treading softly, feeling on sacred ground. The drop in Sally's voice had warned him. Intuition was his if he lacked understanding.

"Mother," said Sally; "we are just the kind of children who most wanted a mother, because father is so delicious; but he's no older than we are and much more innocent . . ."

"More innocent than you are?"

"Much, much more," said Sally, turning her eyes upon her companion, and in their depths he found nothing but a profound innocence, and realised that whatever Sally knew or came to know, the innocence would remain, being a thing apart from ignorance.

"There's Jaunty," said Arnold.

Sally said, Of course. He was very wonderful.

"But he isn't really a butler, is he?" asked Arnold, remembering what Pamela had said.

Here was Sally's chance. "No, we couldn't call him that; but he's no relation."

"Relation? Oh, well—no."

"You didn't think he was?"

Arnold said he had never for one moment thought such a thing.

"Pamela only wondered . . ."

"If he were a relation?"

"Partly, because of you—in case she had to tell you everything . . ."

"And is there any reason she should?"

"You ought to know," said Sally, treading water.

Arnold laughed. He found the idea of Pamela telling him everything, delicious. He could not imagine a day in June more pleasantly spent. He would choose a cathedral of beech-trees; in an aisle open to the heavens above he would sit and worship at the shrine of Pamela's beauty.

They were out of the wood and Sally suggested they should get into the cart. Arnold set his teeth and got in.

"I hope the lunch will be all right," she said as they drove along.

Arnold was certain it would be. She said he had no right to be that. What he ought to feel was that he didn't mind if it wasn't.

He said that was what he did feel. "Is this the village?"

She said it was.

"Are we near your home?"

"Quite, but I'm going to take you first of all . . ."

"Where?" He had visions of a tiresome old aunt.

"Here."

Josephsofat stopped. Sally slipped down and Arnold followed.

They were at the gate of the churchyard. Arnold, deeply embarrassed, followed her down the narrow path, over the grass, stepping as carefully as she stepped. "I feel I must bring you here," she explained.

In silence they stood. Arnold feeling incensed and outraged, or perhaps shy. He could never bring himself to speak of his mother's death to any one. He felt it too much. And here he was, a stranger, with Sally, a stranger, behaving as if they were the most intimate relations. He

didn't know what to say, nor did he know that Sally didn't expect him to say anything. She picked up a leaf or two, patted the grass and walked away, looking so happy, as if she had stood hand in hand and spoken with some one she loved. It was not in such a spirit as this that Arnold went to a churchyard.

"Now you will know us better," said Sally, "and will understand the lunch better, and everything. Let's go, shall we?"

They went, and in a few minutes they reached the tall iron gate which stood open. Sally passed through it into the house. With a wave of the hand she introduced Jaunty, who stood in the hall, and opening a door on the left, she said, "And good Father Lawrence."

When Mr. Lawrence, looking long and searchingly at Arnold Monk, told him he liked his face, there was nothing left, if Sally had but known it, that could come as a shock. After that Monk was prepared for anything, except for the beauty of Pamela who stepped in from the garden, through the open window. He triumphantly found his choice justified.

Sally looked on, holding her breath. Pamela was doing it all so beautifully, carrying in her left hand a bunch of roses, just as she had said she would hold them; wearing a white frock just as she and Sally had planned she should wear it.

"He must, he must, he must . . ." murmured Sally.

"Thank God, he does!" murmured Jaunty, going a step farther, and Jaunty was on the right road this time.

By luncheon so deeply in love was Arnold that the excellent disposition of Jaunty, as shown by the way in which he ran with the soufflé, to save the fall of two inches, was lost upon him until his attention was drawn to it by Sally. "Would a butler who was a real butler, and nothing but a real butler, run with a soufflé to save . . .?"

Arnold hastened to say that only a man of very excep-

tional character would do it—be he butler or Prime Minister.

Whereupon Sally said Jaunty was much more fitted to be the one than the other.

From Jaunty to the soufflé was a step only. How excellent it had been—the soufflé. Arnold could have imagined himself in Paris. Sally warming to his praise admitted its French origin, and Arnold reminded her of their conversation as they had walked.

“What about the delightful poverty?”

“Poverty?” she exclaimed, “but this is an evidence of it; the cook isn’t . . .”

“A real cook?” asked Arnold.

“No, she isn’t. The soufflé was made by a sofa-ridden Mademoiselle.”

Arnold looked bewildered. Sally said it was so easy if only he would listen.

“There is a delightful backyard where roses ramble and tradesmen call, and into this backyard we wheeled Mademoiselle’s sofa. We ran it up against the kitchen window. Through the window English Serena hands the English ingredients to the French Mademoiselle, and they are returned through the window by the French Mademoiselle a French *chef-d’œuvre*. It’s so simple if only people knew.”

“There’s nothing wrong with the lunch, is there?” asked Mr. Lawrence of Sally, and Mr. Monk turned to Pamela.

“Nothing,” said Sally, sliding her hand along the table and taking her father’s. “Do you remember when Aunt Venetia came, and we were so clever and remembered she didn’t take sugar because of her rheumatisms, and we told Serena to use saccharine instead? And do you remember how horrible the rhubarb was, and you—you dear, wonderful thing—ate all yours and didn’t complain? And when we asked Serena about it she said it had been so difficult to get out of the tube, and she showed us the tube, and it was Seccotine; do you remember, darling?”

Sally cast a glance at Pamela. She was talking ear-

nestly to Arnold Monk, and he was listening all the time to Sally. She knew it, because there was a smile lurking at the corners of his mouth that didn't in the least harmonise with the tragedy in Pamela's eyes, but which went perfectly with the Seccotine story.

"Is Pamela harrowing you?" asked Sally.

After luncheon Sally suggested that her father should walk down the village with her, and that Jaunty should go to the post. There were no letters to post so she wrote one and gave it to Jaunty. "Is it a real address, miss?" he asked.

Sally said it would come back if it wasn't.

"And will do for another time?" suggested Jaunty. "What I mean, miss, is this; that I have to go to the cobbler, if that will do as well as the post."

"Go to the—cobbler, Jaunty."

So Jaunty went to the cobbler and Pamela and Arnold to the garden. They made for the place allotted to them by Sally—not only in the garden, but in life.

Sally eased her conscience by saying she knew it was the only thing for Pamela—marriage with a wise and sensible man, and not too exciting a man. Sally felt sure Arnold wasn't that.

Sally was on her way to see Anne Beech, but before she could unburden her heart to Anne she had to get rid of her father. That she did by setting him and the gardener arguing as to whether a tree should come down or not. She knew it would take the better part of the afternoon not to decide that. And while it was not being decided she went to see Anne.

"Anne," she said, "he's come, and he's very nice—a little dull and old, perhaps" (he was thirty), "but I feel it is the right thing, the only thing for Pamela. She says she would feel it to be her duty to love her husband whatever he might be like—so long as he could give her what she wanted. She owes thirty pounds already."

"Thirty pounds!" ejaculated Anne.

And Sally told her it was no light matter or laughing matter. "Thirty pounds, dear Anne, if you haven't got thirty pounds, is a vast sum. Quite as big as a thousand pounds you haven't got."

"But Sally, my child, your father . . ."

"Yes, I know, he's got thirty pounds, even more, perhaps; but you see it's the first thirty pounds with Pamela—there will be many another."

Anne asked what Jaunty thought. Sally said, in a sense, he approved. "He chose him, as a matter of fact. He went up to see Aunt Venetia and he looked over her list of young men and he took steps to find out . . ."

"Jaunty did? Found out about his character, you mean?"

"Yes, father never would; besides, he thinks all young men are good."

Now Sally might plant and pray with all her might, Mademoiselle might mix and stir, Jaunty might serve and wait, and Mr. Lawrence might look on and bless, but there was nothing to make Pamela promise to marry Arnold Monk unless she chose. She had determined to do so until just before dinner; then his eagerness for his food put her off. She didn't like a greedy man. So she told Sally after dinner in the garden.

Sally with the wisdom of her years said, Was it greedy to want dinner that was already three-quarters of an hour late? And Pamela said, "Of course. He should have known nothing of time."

"Did you refuse him, Pamela?"

Through the open window of the dining-room Sally could see her father sitting talking with such charming ease to his future son-in-law. He was perfectly suited to the part. He must play it.

"Did you refuse him?" she repeated.

"No, Sally," whispered Pamela, "I want you to do that; I never could squash even a bumblebee; I can't hurt him. Just tell him—I can't bear it. That I love his clothes and

everything but himself. Do, Sally, there's a darling! I'm going to bed."

"You're not," said Sally, barring the way with her arms held out.

"You're too thin, Scraggums," and Pamela ducked. "You don't want me to marry a man I don't—love?"

Sally said, Of course not. But would she ever love any man?

She wasn't sure. Freddy Lincoln was coming down next week. She would try very hard.

"Another lunch—another dinner?" gasped Sally horrified.

Pamela said, No, they would have bacon and eggs by moonlight—fry them—and if Freddy looked greedy by moonlight it wouldn't show.

Sally said there wouldn't be a moon, and Pamela said that was what she meant. There never was at moonlight picnics.

Pamela kissed her hand and was gone.

Sally stood alone, thinking. It was a bad business.

"The gentlemen, miss, are looking for you and Miss Pamela," said Jaunty at her elbow.

"Jaunty!" she said.

"Yes, miss."

"She doesn't care for him."

"Nor I—quite. Of course, there are things in his favour; but if she doesn't feel quite certain—we must go on as we are."

"Could you tell him, Jaunty?" said Sally wistfully, the weight of responsibility crushing her.

"No—no, miss; he thinks I'm a butler—a real butler."

Sally said he couldn't do that, because they had told him. "Did—he tip you, Jaunty?" she asked, hardly daring to say the words.

"He would—like to, miss."

"Horrible, horrible! Of course Pamela couldn't marry him. I'll tell him. After all you've been to us, Jaunty!"

This was another moment for which Jaunty had lived.

"Pamela is tired," said Sally softly, as Arnold Monk stepped through the window into the garden.

"Tired?" he exclaimed, with deep concern.

"Very tired," said Sally, taking a few steps forward.

"Tired?" repeated Arnold, following. "Are *you* ever tired?"

He looked at the slim child, wondering at the fineness of her beauty.

She said, Of course not. She wasn't old enough to be tired. "Besides," she added, "I haven't had to undergo mental distress. That is what wears."

"Has she?"

"To-day, yes!"

"To-day?"

"To-day. Mr. Monk, do you care—for her?"

He said he cared very deeply; he had come to care for them all very deeply. . . .

"Well, that's it. She cares for you so much that she is worried she can't care more."

"And she has deputed you to tell me?"

Sally said she had asked Jaunty to, but it seemed hardly fair.

"It's not as if he were a real butler, is it?" said Arnold.

If Sally detected petty sarcasm here she ignored it.

"No, poor Jaunty, he has so much to do." She stopped; a briar had caught in her frock; Arnold stooped to release her.

"Sally," he said, "when you have to refuse a man will you do it yourself?"

Sally said she would have to. There would be no one to do it for her.

Arnold said he was very sorry for the man. Sally said she would be very kind to him.

"That would be cruel."

"May I say something?" she asked.

She leant with her arms on the old sundial.

"Do," he said, peeling little bits of lichen off the stone.

"Don't," she said, laying her hand on his, "it's so pretty."

He replaced the little, grey, crumbly bits.

"I want you to understand," said Sally, "that we are what we are because without Her it seems we haven't had quite a fair chance—what worldly people would call a fair chance. I think to have a father like ours is a most wonderful thing. But he perhaps is too different to other people. . . . I think it right to be quite frank with you."

Arnold Monk said it was quite right. It was what he wished.

"And quite honest?"

"Could you be anything else?"

"With teaching, perhaps."

"Go on, please."

"Well, when Pamela came back from London I guessed there might be something, and I waited and waited, but she said nothing. Then came a night when she told me she had met a man different from other men."

"And he?" asked Arnold.

"Was you."

"Then she did—care?"

Sally nodded. "Well, I prayed that night, as hard as I could, that you might be the right one, because—well, for many reasons."

"Honest, remember."

"Well, because Pamela needs a strong and a good man—and a man who can give her all she wants."

"You *are* honest?"

"You told me to be. Well, I am! You see, Jaunty and I have discussed it. It seems quite fair. You have much to give, and you get Pamela. We think that rather a wonderful thing to get, because—well, she's Pamela, and she's rather a delicious thing to live with—it's soft music all the time, which is so exciting. So I arranged that Mademoi-

selles— Did I? I'm not sure." Sally paused—to think. Arnold said:

"You must be quite honest; perhaps Jaunty did?"

"No, Pamela did; but, after all, it doesn't matter who did, does it?"

"So long as Pamela won't marry me."

"If she changes her mind—shall I write?"

Arnold hastily said he thought not. He asked if he might write to Sally—say in three years—two years?

Sally said Pamela would be twenty by then and certain to be married. "But do write, and I will write to you and tell you how Josephsofat is getting along. It will be very slowly by then."

And she danced away in the moonlight and disappeared through the window. Then she came back to say she was sorry she had danced when he was sad. "Forgive me!" and she held out her hand, and for one moment he doubted her.

She went away again and he watched her go into the lighted room. He saw her go up to her father and put her arms round him. It made him feel lonely.

When Arnold had gone to bed, Mr. Lawrence called Jaunty.

"Jaunty," he said, "I am in the dark."

Jaunty put out the lamp. "It's a moth, sir."

"It's a bad business, Jaunty—poor young man. Will he feel it?"

"I'm not sure, sir. It depends on at what hour of the day he goes to-morrow. If he waits to see Miss Sally or if he goes at cockcrow."

"Miss Pamela, you mean?"

"Did I say Miss Sally, sir? Well, it depends."

"Which will mean, what?" asked Mr. Lawrence, groping.

"Ah!" said Jaunty, glad of the darkness.

"You're a wonderful comfort to me, Jaunty. We're not fit to bring up . . ."

Jaunty sniffed. He had no reason to think so—of himself, at all events.

“Good-night, Jaunty; it’s a bad business, hurting a fellow-creature like that. Let me know if he goes at cock-crow, or if he waits.”

At cockcrow, or at what Jaunty chose to call cockcrow, Arnold Monk went. Jaunty saw to his going, and Pamela, some hours later, began to wonder if she had done wisely. By twelve o’clock she was sure she had not. By five she had written to Freddy.

A month later she was engaged to Arnold Monk—who in the meantime had written and re-written, many times over, the letter he was going to send at the end of two long years to Sally. On the day of his engagement he tore it up. No man had ever been more surprised than he was to find himself engaged, or more surprised to discover himself happy—considering that it was Sally who danced in and out of his dreams.

X

BEFORE the village had recovered from the excitement of Pamela's engagement it had wept at her wedding. Then it dried its tears and thought of Sally. With no Pamela to distract, it could concentrate on Sally, who after all was the one it loved best.

On the night of Pamela's wedding there rose from almost every bedside in Panslea prayers for Sally. If she had known she would have been very much surprised, and if Jaunty had known he would have thought it impertinent interference, being quite well able to take care of her himself.

The Vicar prayed that the beautiful child might be spared—he did not say what. He left that to the Almighty, who ordered all things well. Anne prayed that Sally might be spared for Jimmy.

Janet prayed that Sally might be spared all sorrow. She left nothing to chance.

Mrs. Hill prayed that Sally might be spared to be the blessing of some good man; and no one prayed for Pamela.

Jaunty prayed neither for Sally nor for Pamela, but rather for the husband of Pamela, and that long and earnestly.

Within a fortnight of the wedding Sally was doing accounts. "There is much to be paid," she said to herself, "and but little to pay with," and as she said it her father came into the room—the *Times* under his arm. "It's a great thing, Sally," he said, "to know that Pamela is so happily and safely married."

"Um," said Sally; "safely" seemed so ridiculous a word to apply to any state in which Pamela might chance to find herself. "Does the *Times* say so? If the *Times* says it . . ."

"No. Seriously, Sally, it is a great comfort to me—and Jaunty."

"Um," repeated Sally; and at that moment, although she didn't know it, nor did her father imagine it, the high iron gate was gently pushed open and through it slipped the happily and safely married Pamela.

Jaunty heard the gate creak on its hinges, saw it open, saw Pamela walk through it, and then he closed his eyes on a troubled world. When he opened them again there was no Pamela, and he knew he had been dreaming.

But it was no dream of Jaunty's fevered imagination. In the library, standing before her father and Sally, was Pamela, with her arms held out. Laughter in her eyes; love on her lips; beauty in every gesture.

"Go, Sally," she said, with the authority of the newly married woman. "Go!" and Sally went—went to Jaunty. She found him in the garden. He looked old and drawn and frightened—a pitiable old bachelor.

"She's back, Jaunty. She doesn't like it—I knew she wouldn't!"

"Miss Sally, what are you saying? You speak without thought, or the fear of God in your heart."

"It's true, for all that."

And it was. Jaunty looked at Sally. Sally at Jaunty. "I could always manage you," he said.

"Could you?" said Sally, doubting.

Meanwhile Pamela, by every wile she possessed, was trying to coax her father into seeing things from her point of view. "Daddy Long Legs, I've come back.—Yes, to stay. . . ."

"But your husband . . . ?"

"Yes, darling, I know; but I've known you so much longer. . . . I don't care for being married. It's not what I've been accustomed to. I was much happier with you and Sally. It's so dull! It's certainly delightful living with some one who always has stamps—even two-penny-halfpenny ones. I've never once been sent to the post

office since I was married. But, darling, I really like you best," and Pamela kneeling on the floor put her arms round her father, poor, bewildered man. "And isn't it natural?" she went on. "It would be horrid of me to leave willingly a father who has been so darling to me all these years. It has troubled me very much what you must have thought of me. Jaunty should have prevented it, and Sally—I cannot imagine what they were about."

"My child, wait a moment. You have completely—Wait!"

"While you consult Jaunty? Do! But, one moment, darling; you must listen and you must understand! He finds fault with the food. When I think of what you have eaten for our sakes—for Serena's—for . . ."

Her father laid a restraining hand on hers. "Not that name—now . . ."

"But She would understand," pleaded Pamela. "When you married Her, did you send for the manager in the best hotel in Paris and complain of the food? Imagine such a thing—in Paris, too! Now go to your Jaunty."

And to his Jaunty he went, and found him waiting outside the door. Jaunty led the way to the dining-room. Mr. Lawrence followed. Jaunty closed the door and made certain it was shut. Then he faced Mr. Lawrence, who said, "Jaunty, this is bad"; and Jaunty, pulling himself together, said:

"It's—damnable, sir," and felt much the better for it.

"What's to be done?"

"Does she give specific reasons, sir?"

"Yes."

Jaunty paused and frowned. Mr. Lawrence must give him a lead over the thin ice. He was a married man, Jaunty was a bachelor, and had never wished to be otherwise.

"Mr. Monk, it seems, complained of the cooking—in Paris."

"A little lacking in *savoir faire*," said Jaunty, "in Paris."

There was silence. It was extraordinary how troublesome Miss Pamela had always been, thought Jaunty. "She has no graver charges to bring?" he asked.

"No, none."

"Ah!" Jaunty was relieved. "You didn't ask her, sir?"

"I asked her nothing, Jaunty; how could I? It is . . ."

"It is."

"It is indeed.—Jaunty!"

Jaunty, who was about to open the door, stopped. "Sir?" he said.

"She's looking very beautiful."

"It's Paris, sir. My sis . . . I mean . . . I say, if you want to keep a woman quiet dress her badly. Dress her well and she's got to show herself off. You can't keep her in. That's why dowdy women are so often good, and good women very often dowdy."

"You surprise me, Jaunty," said Mr. Lawrence.

"I should be sorry to do that, sir, especially at such a moment as this."

And Jaunty smiled, knowing that he had within him the power to surprise Mr. Lawrence even more. But the less surprises in life the better, he thought, and he went to oil the hinge of the front gate. Every time it creaked it reminded him of Pamela's return. It should not grumble at her going.

XI

JAUNTY wondered if any one in Panslea had seen the return of the lately-wed Pamela to the house of her father. Was Panslea blind that Jaunty should doubt it? Of course Janet Mason had caught a glimpse of Pamela's skirt as she had passed through the gate. No one else had lately had a trousseau, or had even ordered more than three of anything at a time, and there wasn't a skirt in Panslea that wasn't much too full, judged by the dictates of the prevailing fashion.

Janet carried the news to Anne Beech, and Anne rose from her weeding suffering most plainly from blood to the head. Her charming face was rosy red and she refused to believe that Janet had seen Pamela. Her good common-sense told her it wouldn't be true.

Janet said that, at first, she had not been able to believe her eyes; but she asked Anne if she was given to imagining things, and Anne was bound to admit she was not. But here Anne was certain she had. It was imagination, of course. What else could it be?

"Pamela," said Janet stoutly.

"If it was," said Anne, "I think the less we say about it the better, for the present." And Janet said she was never in a hurry to talk of things that didn't concern her. Yet she had run all the way from Mr. Lawrence's house to Anne's cottage. Anne thought it would be an aeroplane Janet would be requiring when she had something to tell that really interested her.

But Anne was cross; she was worried. Pamela home again! What could it mean?

She went up the village, and the first person she met was Jaunty. He was in a hurry. When he was in a hurry

he rode a wooden quadricycle. It was as unique a machine as Jaunty was a man. When Jaunty was once mounted no one detained him. But now he stood at the side of the machine with one foot on a pedal, and he made time to tell Miss Beech that Mrs. Monk was back. Anne was surprised that he admitted it. She said she knew. Miss Mason had told her. At that Jaunty stiffened; Miss Mason saw too much.

Anne said it was a little difficult not to see Mrs. Monk if she walked through the iron gate right in the sight of all Panslea. Jaunty took exception to that. Mr. Lawrence's house was in sight of only one quarter of Panslea. From across the Green the Miss Does looked into its very door, but they were short-sighted, and wouldn't look if they weren't.

From one corner of the Green any one who chose could look into Miss Sally's window. From the other corner any one who dared to look could see Mr. Lawrence's. Of course, the post office! Every one had a fine view from there, sideways, of the whole house; but surely there were more moments in the day than one in which to post a letter, and why should Miss Mason have chosen that very one?

"Jaunty," said Anne, "I am so sorry—for you all."

Jaunty kicked the pedal with his foot, and as it whizzed round he watched its revolutions. Anne watched the tired worn face of the old man. Then he suddenly looked up and said, "Why sorry, miss? Mr. Monk had to go away for a few days—on urgent business—so Miss Pamela naturally came home to her—to us. To whom else could she have gone?"

"Oh, that was it," said Anne, relieved and delighted, yet doubting. But Jaunty had given her the lead, she would follow.

How ridiculous of Janet to make it out a disaster! In justice to Janet she hadn't. She had only run to say Pamela was home, and had got very hot in the running.

"You tell that to Miss Mason—and every one you meet, miss," said Jaunty.

And Jaunty rode away. He didn't tell Anne so, but he was off to the station, then to London to see Mr. Monk and get to the bottom of this bad business.

He got to London late in the afternoon and drove straight to the house of Mr. Monk. He could not have bettered its position. With no small pride he gave the address. The cabman could have no idea how good an address it was, taking into consideration everything—an impossible father and an indifferently dressed daughter.

"It might well have been this," murmured Jaunty as the cab drove through respectable but deadly dull streets and thoroughfares. "Without her ways—her manners—it must have been one of these—and what of my share in the business!"

When the cab stopped he admitted to himself, "I, alone, could not have achieved this," and he trod lightly the wide marble doorsteps and rang the visitors' bell. The man who opened the door was exactly what Jaunty knew he ought to have been if he had been a real butler. Jaunty respected him. The butler, on his part, showed his respect for Jaunty by treating him as if he were anything in the world rather than a bad butler.

Jaunty asked if Mr. Monk were at home. He would rather have asked the question of a footman. And the butler—who was really a butler, and looked it—said Mr. Monk had that moment returned. "What name, sir?"

Jaunty hesitated, said "Mr.," then added with a gesture of indifference, "Just Jaunty."

The butler opened the door at the left of the hall and announced "Mr. Justice Jaunty," and Jaunty, blushing at the greatness of the position thrust upon him, found himself face to face with Mr. Monk—the deserted, the abominably treated Mr. Monk.

He was writing at a table, the size of which impressed Jaunty. Mr. Monk too impressed him. He looked so

calm, so cool, so collected. His hair was as tidy as Jaunty had ever seen it. There was no sign of distress or disturbance or even hurry in its parting. A horrible thought struck Jaunty. Had Mr. Monk already recovered from the loss of Miss Pamela? Was he growing accustomed to be without her? Was he as thankful to get rid of her as Jaunty had been? Yet he hadn't given her a fair chance. What was a fortnight against the eighteen years Jaunty had suffered in silence?

Mr. Monk rose, looking very much concerned, whether over his pen or Miss Pamela Jaunty couldn't determine. Mr. Monk tried the nib on his thumbnail. It gave way.

"Temper," thought Jaunty. "Nothing spoils pens like it." With that very pen Mr. Monk had no doubt written to Miss Pamela. No pen could bear the weight of such anger.

"Anything wrong, Jaunty?" he asked.

"I should advise a new one, sir."

"The pen, yes," letting it drop. "Nothing wrong in any other . . ."

"Nothing wrong that I know of, sir—everything just as usual at home—too much so, if I may say so. It was that very question I was going to ask you."

The look on Mr. Monk's face deepened to one of bewilderment, and Jaunty felt his innocence established.

"Sit down, Jaunty."

"No, sir."

He preferred to stand. He could see better. His heart went out with a rush to Mr. Monk, a rush of gratitude, of understanding, of sympathy. Mr. Monk had given all this to Miss Pamela, and Jaunty went back in his mind to the days when he had grieved over her old frocks, her three-year-old hats. Here in striking contrast were satin brocade curtains, lined with white—perishable, beautiful, expensive. He sank up to his ankles in soft velvet pile—at least he was going to tell Mademoiselle he had. As she didn't understand him, he might as well enjoy the deceit

to its full depth. His eyes rested on pictures hanging on the walls, portraits of distinguished ancestors, ancestresses, wearing respectively knee-breeches and wigs, patches and powder. All these things had become Miss Pamela's by the reading in Panslea church of a service—a service indifferently read, not a word of which he had heard, except Miss Pamela's "I will," and now she wouldn't—so like her.

"Well, Jaunty," said Mr. Monk, lighting a cigarette.

"Mrs. Monk wants more clothes, sir, if she is staying . . ."

Then like sunshine after storm came Mr. Monk's announcement that he could not spare her. There was tenderness in his voice—absurd tenderness; the corners of his eyes wrinkled into a smile, and Jaunty found him ridiculously handsome—or rather, handsome and ridiculous.

Then Mr. Monk went on to say that it was very unlucky he should have been called away on business. "But business is business, as you know, Jaunty," and he waved the lighted match in the air, then laid it on the tray appointed for the purpose. Jaunty sighed. The pleasant tyranny of order that had once been as second nature to him had power still, he found. He revered that ash-tray. Business? It was such ages since he had lived in a house where business had any place that he had almost forgotten it could be part of any everyday life. "But once a clerk," he thought, "always a clerk. And never a butler; never a butler."

Then to show Mr. Monk that although a man of business at heart he knew of other things as important, he murmured something about a honeymoon, feeling that must at least be as tiresome as it was unnecessary; but it was a honeymoon, and as such Panslea held it of some importance.

"Of course," said Mr. Monk, "it was most unfortunate—but, of course, Mrs. Monk explained."

"Of course," said Jaunty, "of course." (It was ever Mrs. Monk's way to explain.)

Then Mr. Monk said he was going that night to fetch her back. "There is a train?" he asked.

Jaunty said there were two to be had for the taking.

Mr. Monk said one would do if they could catch it. Jaunty said they could do that if they went at once. With the Paris episode still fresh in his memory he was sure Mr. Monk wouldn't do that. But Jaunty was wrong. Mr. Monk was prepared to go at once. He rang the bell: gave hurried orders to the butler, gathered up his papers, locked his writing-table drawer, and said, "Ready, Jaunty?"

The butler murmured something about dinner and Mr. Monk said he didn't want any. Jaunty heard that with surprise and said to himself, "There—he had the choice of dinner or Miss Pamela, and he chose . . ."

There is no doubt which Jaunty at the moment would have chosen.

As they drove to the station Mr. Monk sat with his watch in his hand. He spoke very little, and when he spoke it was to ask how Miss Sally was. Jaunty said she was as she always was . . .

"Surprised to see Mrs. Monk?"

Jaunty said, Not very. Nothing surprised Miss Sally.

"But surely . . .," began Mr. Monk, then he stopped, and he said no more until they drove into the station; then, shutting his watch, he said, "Nothing surprises her?"

"Well, very little," said Jaunty.

"She was glad to see her sister, no doubt."

"No doubt," agreed Jaunty.

"And not surprised?"

"Perhaps," said Jaunty.

"You have your ticket?"

Jaunty said he had it. He took it from his purse and Mr. Monk glanced at it. He paid the difference on the third-class ticket, and Jaunty travelled first-class with

the unquestioned control of the window. Mr. Monk slept. Travelling "first" was not the adventure to him that it was to Jaunty. Jaunty, on the other hand, was not going to fetch a wife, so if either had the right it was he who should have slept. He wondered if any one in Panslea would see him alight from the train. It would be snobbish, he decided, to get out more slowly than was his habit; but he saw no reason to hurry. He didn't.

When he and Mr. Monk reached home he laid his hat on the doorstep and, throwing open the library door, announced, "Mr. Monk."

The room was not lit up, but it was not so dark on this summer's evening that Jaunty couldn't distinguish the figures of his two young ladies in white. He judged them to be sitting at their father's feet, as they so often sat. He saw a slim figure detach herself from the group and come across the room towards Mr. Monk. By the way she walked he knew her to be Miss Pamela. She was more of a woman in her movements than Miss Sally—more graceful, having nothing starched in her outline. Miss Sally's frock stuck out all round if it were fresh from the washtub. Mrs. Monk's clung to her beautiful limbs in a way Jaunty disapproved but was forced to admire.

"Well, Mr. Monkey Man!" said Pamela, and that was all. But it was said with so exquisite a grace and so charming a manner that Jaunty felt a lump in his throat, and he left Mr. Lawrence and Sally to deal with the situation. And there was no situation to deal with, Pamela had made it an episode. Sally and her father went for a walk round the garden.

"It seems all right, Sally," said he.

"Quite," said she, and there the matter ended so far as Sally and her father were concerned.

Pamela had to explain her little joke to her husband, and it turned out that her sense of humour was not his. Pamela said it might not be the worse for that, and he said

gravely, "Yes; but it is as well we should understand one another from the beginning."

That Pamela said they would never do. If they understood one another in the end it would be wonderful. Then there was the middle too to be got through, which would be the most dangerous state of all. "When I'm tired of you, Mr. Monkey Man."

"Are you not that already?" he asked.

"I wonder," said Pamela; and Arnold wondered. He didn't know what to think. Nor did Mr. Lawrence and Jaunty when they came to think things calmly over the next morning. Sally thought nothing about it, except that she was very sleepy because Pamela had told her all about Paris—it had taken most of the night, so she vowed.

Janet Mason went to Anne Beech. "I owe an apology to some one," she said, "and I don't know to whom. I cannot imagine why I jumped to the conclusion that Pamela didn't like her husband."

"I shouldn't apologise to any one—you certainly can't to the Monk nor to the Monkey, and no one else matters."

"But it would be a relief."

"You must deny yourself that comfort, Janet, my dear, and the next time you see something your eyes can't believe, don't you believe it either. It's safer in this world—and much kinder. Eyes are dangerous things; they see everything but themselves."

"If I had really felt the influence—Her influence . . ."

"You would have judged her child kindly. We must all remember to do that, Janet."

"She has gone, non?" asked Mademoiselle of Jaunty, who waited for her tray.

"Mais, oui," said Jaunty; "gone, allez, bon jour."

"She looked happy—the beautiful child?" asked Mademoiselle, spreading a piece of toast thinly with butter, Jaunty's eyes upon her.

"She laughed beaucoup," said Jaunty, looking away,

grieved that Mademoiselle should have suspected him of measuring the depth of the butter she spread—it wasn't as if she were Matilda.

"The house à Londres, it is a nice house?" asked Mademoiselle, eating her toast.

Here was Jaunty's chance given him generously by Mademoiselle. "Oui, very nice, very grand, very beautiful, very large—hall tout marble—walls tout silk—curtains tout brocade—lined with thick white silk. Carpets all sink in, so deep!" Jaunty stooped and pointed to his ankle-bone. "Oui vraiment, solemn truth, non pas tout à fait—very nearly. Pictures on walls—lovely ladies—grand gentlemen—ancestors, comprendre?"

Mademoiselle nodded. This telegraphic mode of communication Jaunty thought best suited to her French intelligence. He went on: "Mr. Monk, he eat no dinner. When butler said 'Dinner,' Mr. Monk said 'No dinner, fetch Mrs. Monk, train, come Jaunty,'—comme ça comprendre?" And Jaunty removed Mademoiselle's tray, then said again "Comprendre?" and Mademoiselle nodded.

She thought, How tenderly the dear old man lied. She knew exactly the depths of those carpets to the fraction of an inch. Jaunty went on to say that it was quite clear that Mr. Monk liked his wife better than his dinner, which did not surprise Mademoiselle as much as it seemed to surprise Jaunty.

She also understood that Mr. Monk was very rich. But what of that? Since she had come to live at Panslea with the Lawrences she had found money of little consequence. There was very little money, that was quite evident, but it made no difference. It was all happiness and laughter. It was only Jaunty who worried. And it was Jaunty who saved and paid and prayed, that she verily believed, and kept things going.

"Ah!" Mademoiselle closed her eyes. He was a dear, good old man was this Jaunty. But butler? No. That was he not. What then was he?

That was what Panslea wanted to know. It knew he had been clerk to old Mr. Lawrence—but before he was clerk? Had he been child, son, brother, everything that most men had been? There were a few in Panslea who doubted it. Child he must at some time have been, for the best in a child's nature was still his.

The people of Panslea, true to their ideal, never spoke of Pamela's return, except Lord Bridlington to Mr. Masters; Mr. Masters to Mrs. Masters; Mrs. Masters to Janet Mason; Janet Mason to Miss Doe. Miss Doe timidly—and only after prayer—to Mrs. Hill, and there the chain was broken.

Mrs. Hill said nothing to any one, and Panslea settled down into its ordinary uneventful life, watching peacefully the growth of Sally.

Michael Mason lived from day to day for Janet's letters. So tactful was Janet in writing that she avoided all mention of Pamela, except once to say that her heart (Janet's) bled for him; and then not quite knowing what to write about she wrote about Anne Beech. So Michael got what he wanted and never told Janet what a goose she was, or attempted to stop the bleeding of her heart. For the more tactful she became the more she wrote about Anne, which was well.

Michael heard about Pamela in London. From time to time he saw her and, like the rest of her world, admired her; but knowing Panslea, and the father, and the sister, and the ridiculous butler, who waited and longed for news of her, he drew her gently to talk of Panslea and of them. But Pamela laughed and told amusing stories of her father, which she made even more amusing than they were. It was not the side of Mr. Lawrence's character Michael most admired that Pamela loved to dwell on. Some one said to Michael, "What a quaint person Mrs. Monk's father must be!" and Michael answered that it was a pity there weren't more like him in the world.

Pamela made no effort to see her father and Sally, and

Sally began to feel lonely and forsaken. Anne said she must remember what an emancipation it had been to Pamela, and Sally nodding said she understood. It was for her father she felt. He would love to see Pamela.

"Couldn't he go up?"

"Pamela doesn't suggest it, and when he suggested it she said every day was full up, and she added that she wished he wore a kilt, because they never get out of fashion. She has learnt to know when a man is well dressed and when he isn't."

"Don't you know, Sally?" asked Anne.

"It isn't at a man's clothes I look," said Sally. "I should be proud of Daddy Long Legs wherever I went."

Anne knew Sally was right. And yet she understood too Pamela's feelings, and knew that one has to be either much older than Pamela, or nearly as large-hearted as Sally, to be indifferent to the personal appearance of those we love.

XII

ON her eighteenth birthday Sally knelt at her open window and she prayed, "O God, give me romance, and don't let me marry the curate with ebony hairbrushes and without opposition," and having prayed she still knelt awaiting her birthday gift. It came straight from the gates of Heaven—a June morning. She saw it peeping through the curtain of haze and mist, and stretching out her arms she called to it. The flute of a bird answered her—then another—and the curtain went up on the newly-awakened dawn wrapped in pink clouds. As she rose a full chorus of birds greeted her, and she blushed at the tribute which had really been paid to Sally. But Sally didn't mind; she went back to bed to give the dawn time to grow accustomed to the light flattery of the day—besides, she was sleepy.

A few hours later her father had begged her to forgive him for having forgotten her birthday, and Jaunty had given her a pincushion without asking her forgiveness.

"Is it what you wanted, miss?" he asked; and she said it was, but she hadn't prayed for it.

"What did you pray for?" he ventured.

"Ah!" said Sally.

"What could it have been?" wondered Jaunty as he watched her drive away in her cart. "What could it have been?"

Sally went down the lane in her cart, and if there wasn't romance in that she, at least, drove a pony she loved, through country she loved, at a pace Josephsofat loved, and she thought she was as near Heaven as she was ever likely to be on earth. While she was measuring the exact distance between Heaven and earth, Josephsofat stopped

suddenly, which he was bound to do unless he had deliberately chosen to walk over a young man who stood in the middle of his path.

The young man laughed at Sally and her cart. Sally sitting in a chair that lacked stuffing looked at the young man, and the young man who had never taken his eyes off Sally since she had gladdened them, laughed again, and they both laughed. Not really because Sally looked odd sitting in the chair, or because Josephsofat was fat, but just because the man and Sally were both young. That was all, and it was a good enough joke if one thought of it seriously, which wasn't possible. If Sally had been sixty and the man seventy, they wouldn't have done more than politely bow—and he perhaps would have said, "I beg your pardon for standing in your way." But of course he wouldn't have stood in the way. He would have passed in a car and she perhaps in a one-horse victoria. O dull, desperately dull old age! What it leaves behind it! Springs—summers—days in June—laughter—and tears, even tears!

"Did you say your prayers this morning?" asked the young man, scrambling up the bank out of the way, and sitting there, digging his heels in the soft grasses that grew in the bank, so that he should not slip.

And Sally, not in the least surprised at the question since everything that had praised that morning must also have prayed, said, "Yes, of course."

"And may I ask what you prayed for?"

Now here was a difficulty. In the first place, she couldn't tell this stranger what she had refused to tell Jaunty; in the second place, it wouldn't be quite fair to the curate who might at any moment chance to pass that way, so often was he bent on some errand of mercy. Besides this young man might be travelling in ebony hair-brushes, though Sally was bound to admit he didn't look like it. Sally had said she never looked at a man's clothes; but this young man she knew was well dressed without the

bother of looking. Being in a difficulty she said, "I prayed for you."

"For me? By what name—under what heading—under what Heaven?"

"You come under no heading. The Heaven is above you. You have no name, so far as I know. I prayed for every one who loves a summer's day, and I prayed that this day might last as long as possible and then fly away, when it must, on the wings of a glorious sunset. And I prayed that no one might be wicked this day but happy and good."

"And must goodness and happiness go hand in hand all the days of their—your life?" Sober companions, he thought them.

"Shouldn't they?"

"I wonder what is goodness?"

Sally thought she saw it shining in the young man's eyes, but she daren't say so.

"D'you know Simon Saxton?" she asked.

The young man said he didn't—that he was sorry he didn't.

"Why, if you don't know him?"

"Because at his name your voice softened, and there are tears in your eyes; are those reasons enough? I have others."

"Do you like cushions?" asked Sally.

"In chairs?"

"Yes, in chairs."

"I loathe them."

"Oh!"

"Does that spoil the story? I love them."

"I meant well-stuffed chairs."

"Oh, of course, I love them. I am of a most indolent disposition."

He slid a few inches down the bank to better his position, a thing he had not thought it possible to do.

Then Sally told him of old Simon Saxton, and how she

had been appointed Inspector of armchairs, and leaning over the side of the cart she pointed with the end of her lashless whip to her name written on the shaft.

"Now, I must guess what 'S' stands for?"

"Simon never grumbles," said Sally.

"You visit him? And you call it good of him not to grumble?"

"He's what I call a saint."

"We are told the life of a saint is a hard one."

"Not now," said Sally triumphantly, "he's got the softest cushioned chair in Panslea."

"And you the softest heart?"

"And your head?" asked Sally; and they laughed at the stupid little joke just because they were young, for no other reason in this round, ridiculous world.

"How did you come down the lane?" asked Sally, sobering.

"Heaven be praised and the evening paper that led me. I came on an adventure. My love of adventure and love of romance led— No, to be quite truthful I must go back to the evening paper; I followed the route mapped out by that most blessed of journalistic endeavours, and I came down the road described as 'indifferent.' May Heaven help it and its circulation. Indifferent!"

"Romance? You said romance, didn't you?" asked Sally, awed by the strangeness of the coincidence. (As if two young things didn't always go out in search of romance.)

"Romance; it is a thing I pray for. Give me romance . . ."

"And don't let me . . ." went on Sally.

"No; I don't go so far as that. Don't let me—what?"

"Give me romance. Did you pray that—those very words—this morning?" asked Sally, her eyes widening.

"Yes," lied the young man, "in a sense. I have prayed for it all my life, and I am in a stockbroker's office. Do you believe in prayer?"

"I do," said Sally solemnly; "I am bound to."

"Well, I must too. But it has been long in coming."

Sally couldn't agree; so she said the puppy had eaten the stuffing out of the chair-cushion; and through the hole the puppy's teeth had made she drew what was left of the horsehair slowly and deliberately, and asked the young man if he thought the damage done would come under the head of ordinary wear and tear. The young man said he had no doubt about it. What was more ordinary in the world than a puppy, and every puppy wore and tore. For what other purposes were they made?

Sally felt she was having a very wonderful birthday. She wasn't in the least disturbed at talking to a strange young man, because she spoke to every one in Panslea, man, woman, or child. That he was a man and young was a happy chance. He on his part was not so bad as he seemed. He knew well enough who Sally was, and it was mere diplomacy on his part to demur when she asked him to luncheon.

"My father would be so glad to see you," she said.

"But do you think I may? You know nothing about me."

"Is there anything to know?"

"Nothing beyond a name, I'm afraid. We are bound to have mutual friends."

"Bound to," agreed Sally. "Begin 'A'; do you know the Arnolds?"

"Matthew Arnold—Light of Asia—or the World, was it?"

"No, I mean the dark Arnolds of England."

"Well, no."

"The Bridlingtons?"

"Red-brick Bridlington?" exclaimed the young man. "Of course, I am on my way there now. Is that introduction enough?"

"Lunch is at one," said Sally.

"One moment—about this chair business. We are something in the same line of business."

Sally asked, "What business?" Did he inspect arm-chairs for the people of somewhere else?

Well, not quite. He travelled in furniture.

"What do you travel in?" asked Sally, immensely interested.

"Furniture."

"How? Are you wheeled about in a Chesterfield—or trundled in a wardrobe?"

"Oh, that sort of travel. I travel in furniture and I drive in a caravan."

Here was romance with a vengeance. "A real caravan?" asked Sally.

"Quite real. Red wheels—green body. No, it's not a butterfly, I swear. Green body, curtains—there, does that convince you? No butterfly has curtains. It's really a caravan, windows and all."

"And what draws the caravan?"

"The dear old twins—Pomp and Circumstance."

"Are they horses?"

"They would call themselves so, no doubt, if they were asked."

"And could answer."

"Precisely. Well, you admit the fraternity? Travellers in furniture?"

"I admit your right to be numbered among the few. Go on telling me."

"It's quite simple. *You* go about making people comfortable in armchairs. I go about making them comfortable in cottages—see?"

Sally did not see.

"If you took off your sunbonnet you would," said the young man, adding softly, greatly daring, "Neither Pompey nor Circe (for short) ever wear blinkers, on principle. Mine—not theirs. They have none."

The young man wanted to see Sally's hair. He suspected the sun was jealous of it. But he had no right to ask her to do such a thing, even to put the sun out, and

Sally had no intention of doing it. So she looked at him with grave displeasure—and they both laughed. The same old reason! When he had laughed he begged her pardon humbly and she forgave him graciously, taking off her sunbonnet as a token of forgiveness.

“Now go on,” she said.

“Well, I go into a cottage, I see at a glance what sort of an old woman she is with whom I have to deal. If she loves her tables and chairs, and if I can see in them her face, and deeper down her heart, I make some excuse for having disturbed her. I pay her a pretty and a perfectly sincere compliment. If she is charming I pay her another compliment—prettier, if a little less sincere. I ask her, if by chance a very handsome young man I passed in the street in London, one Tuesday, could have been her son, the likeness was so remarkable? And if she is a very nice old lady she says, ‘Why, of course it was!’ She had had a letter from him only the other Wednesday telling her to look out for a softy who was coming her way. Then perhaps she grows serious and says I am like her dear boy—who died in a far-away country—then I pay her no compliments, but I say good-bye, and I go with her blessing tucked away in my heart. If, on the other hand, the old woman who owns the cottage cares neither for her chairs nor her tables—if they are badly kept—I offer her in exchange for them a Brussels square—fawn ground covered with red roses—a picture, framed, of Queen Victoria, and another of Moses in the bulrushes—also framed—and a rocking-chair.

“Having entirely refurnished her cottage and made it thoroughly comfortable and quite hideous, from my point of view, and no doubt from yours, I go off with my table and chair, feeling exchange to be no robbery. The other day I came across a really genuine Chippendale chair and a lacquer clock—things you seldom find in cottages, or anywhere. The woman who owned them had no affection for anything. She said every time the clock struck it

reminded her of her father, who drank. She said she didn't stop the clock striking because a Higher Hand than hers had taken no steps to stop her father, so she supposed she needed the reminder, painful though it was. She had no soul, no soul!"

"Saying it twice," said Sally, "won't make it true. How do you know she had no soul?"

"By the very joy in her face when I left her."

"She was glad to get rid of you."

"In a sense. I left her with the promise of so much."

"Of what—money? That didn't show she had no soul. It showed perhaps that her children wanted soles to their boots, and clothes and food for their poor little bodies."

"She had no children," said the young man.

"Poor old thing!" said Sally.

"She didn't complain. She was Miss Buttersweet—nice name, isn't it? And she has no relations 'to speak of' (her words—not mine), and I left her without giving her money, but in exchange for those two uncared-for pieces of furniture I promised her a Brussels carpet . . ."

"Pink roses on a buff ground—cabbage roses?" asked Sally.

"Quite right!" said the young man. "A walnut (veneered, I own) chiffonier, a mahogany table, round, a portrait of Queen Victoria . . ."

"Framed?" said Sally, "and a picture of Moses in the bulrushes, framed?"

"Yes, yes; and a sofa and an armchair."

"Is that all?" asked Sally.

"No; a clock in the shape of a frying-pan or a banjo, I forget which."

"How did the caravan hold it all?"

"It didn't. Miss Buttersweet and I went shopping. I gave her *carte blanche* to buy. She was very diffident, very ladylike, very proper, but her womanliness overcame in time her sense of propriety, and we might have been an engaged couple buying our furniture for our little

home—Brixton way. She bought what she loved in exchange for what she didn't care for. Is there injustice in that?"

"So long as you don't give a small sum for what you know to be valuable. I hate that."

It appeared that the young man hated it too. "I am quite fair, and I have collected quite a nice lot of furniture—for my home—not Brixton way."

Sally liked this young man with his sunburnt face and his laughing eyes. He was more like her father than any man she had ever met, and so different from Arnold. Poor darling Pamela!

"You have ruined the homes of rural England," suggested Sally.

"By making them comfortable?"

"By making them hideous."

"Ask Miss Buttersweet; think of the difference in her life. The frying-pan clock never reminds her of her father when it strikes, because it doesn't strike. Do you know, I might have been a piano-tuner—aren't you very rash?"

Sally said she wished he had been, their piano wanted tuning. The young man shook his head. He wished he had the right to forbid her ever again to speak to strange young men. But he had offended once. "You knew I wasn't," he ventured; there was at least comfort in that.

Sally nodded.

"What did you think I was?"

Sally thought awhile, and then said that he was rather like a butler. Not a real butler, of course; but just a little like one who isn't really a butler.

"Wait a moment; I've heard that before. Is it out of some play?"

Sally didn't think so. She knew no plays. "Come," she said.

"Would you talk like this—to any one?" He was strangely upset by the thought.

"Not unless he looked like . . ."

"A butler?"

"Not a real one."

And they went: Sally driving in her cart, the young man walking beside her. They passed among other cottages, Anne's. Anne was at luncheon. She jumped up to see what was passing and she saw Sally. Then the young man. It was enough. Jimmy had a rival. Anne knew it at once. But she didn't know it was in answer to Sally's prayer; that Sally had prayed for romance and was taking it home to lunch with her.

Mr. Lawrence made much of romance; welcomed it with open arms, and asked of it an immense number of questions. So many that the young man was bewildered. He sat between two fires at luncheon: Mr. Lawrence on one side, on the other Sally.

"How can you get away?" asked Sally from her side, "if you are on the Stock Exchange. Oughtn't you to be making money?"

"You do that best by staying away. It's different just now from other businesses."

"Bentleigh is your name?" said Mr. Lawrence, from the other side. "I wonder if a Bentleigh I used to know could have been your father?"

"What would you do if you had a pony that wouldn't go?" asked Sally.

"I never had one," said Mr. Bentleigh.

"You mean that you don't remember him?" said Mr. Lawrence. "He died young, I suppose, and yet the Bentleigh I knew was . . ."

"I was answering your daughter's question, sir; my father died when I was very young."

"Who looks after the horse twins?" asked Sally.

"Brodrrib, when we're on the road."

"Brodrrib?" said Mr. Lawrence, "I remember that name. I was at Oxford with him. He became a botanist of some note . . ."

"This is an old factotum at home—knows a lot about botany, I'll be bound. He is a sort of groom, gardener, coachman, tinker, tailor—has been a sailor—would be a soldier if . . ."

"Very like Jaunty," said Sally.

"Who's Jaunty?"

"Probably one of the same family," said Mr. Lawrence. "It's curious how local names are. My Brodrib came from Worcestershire."

"Mine certainly from the borders of Worcestershire and Gloucestershire."

"Jaunty?" said Sally. "He's a sort of uncle—butler—English governess—church dignitary . . ."

"May I see him?" asked the young man.

"I can't think why you haven't. At this hour he generally stands and waits."

"And also serves?"

"I know what you mean," said Sally. "It's often been said about Jaunty. Daddy Long Legs, where is Jaunty?"

"Jaunty?" said Mr. Lawrence. "I don't know. Call him!"

Now the difference between a real butler and one that isn't real is that for the real butler you ring. You call the butler who isn't real. It's a nice distinction, and Jaunty set great store by it.

Sally called him, but no Jaunty came, and when Sally came back to the table Mr. Lawrence had monopolised romance, and for the first time in her life she found her father too great a talker and his theories absurd!

Jaunty was halfway down the village and bound for Anne's cottage. Anne had seen him coming and was at the door to meet him. "What's the matter, Jaunty?"

"There's a strange young man lunching, miss." Jaunty made a jerky movement with his hand in the direction of Mr. Lawrence's house. "I don't like it. Mr. Lawrence will as likely as not leave them alone. Will you come

down, miss? I don't like young men picked up in the road."

Anne didn't either. She promised to come down. "What is he like?" she asked.

Jaunty couldn't say exactly. He hadn't waited to see. The manner of his coming was enough. He had always said mischief would come of Miss Sally's over-friendliness to all men.

Anne was disturbed on Jimmy's account. Jaunty on general principles. He had married one young lady well from a worldly point of view—and the one that least mattered. Miss Sally was to do very differently.

So differently that Anne deemed it wiser not to mention, at this moment, the dear Jimmy who was sweltering in India—saving up his money—economising in polo ponies and probably in ice. Running the risk of unpopularity with his regiment, all for the sake of Sally who, Anne was perfectly convinced, never thought of him except when she gave Josephsopat carrots on Sunday—and only then because Jimmy had suggested it as a good moment.

Anne begged Jaunty to sit down, but he preferred to stand; it had become a habit.

"Miss Sally must go to London," he said.

"To whom?" asked Anne.

"To her aunt. Mrs. Monk has prepared the way, as it were. Mrs. Lombard now sees what dressing can do—what can be done with the right stuff, and Miss Sally's that. Mr. Monk was a catch and Mrs. Lombard knew it, and didn't believe Miss Pamela was pretty enough. Mrs. Lombard would have struck him off my list—but I knew I was right. Who should know better than I her fascination? Miss Sally is worth ten of Miss Pamela, though I say it as shouldn't."

"And how will you manage it, Jaunty?"

"I suggest you should do that, miss."

"Me?" said Anne in astonishment.

"Yes, you, please, miss. Mr. Lawrence shall ask Mrs.

Lombard down to lunch. We've done it once; we can do it again. We pleased Mr. Monk, we can please Mrs. Lombard. The soufflé needn't rise nearly so high to meet with her approval. She won't have forgotten the Seccotine rhubarb. Then, miss, if you will be so kind as to wear the lilac cotton you wore in church two Sundays ago, and walk up to tea—the thing is done."

"How, Jaunty?"

"You will suggest Miss Sally going to London. You will say what she needs is Mrs. Lombard's influence, and coming from you it will carry weight. She will ask Miss Sally, and Mr. Lawrence must be made to see the importance of her going."

"You think it so important?"

"I do! If Miss Sally thinks any strange young man good enough to ask in to lunch she must see other men and learn to discriminate."

"And if I don't, Jaunty—do as you ask?"

"You will disappoint me, miss."

That was enough. After all, what was the use in keeping Sally from seeing men? Jaunty was right. The more she saw the better it might be.

So she promised to wear her mauve cotton. In the meantime she might as well see the young man and judge for herself whether he was likely to rival Jimmy, in Sally's affections.

"Oughtn't you to be there?"

"At the house, miss?" asked Jaunty.

"Yes."

"I don't dare. I am ashamed. It's pancakes to-day. Pancakes in June—*such* pancakes!"

XIII

ANNE saw Mr. Bentleigh and found him pleasant to look upon. Jaunty saw him and found him something very different. He learnt too, for the first time, his name. It was a revelation.

"This is Jaunty," said Sally gaily, so gaily that Jaunty looked at her, grieved that in the face of such tragedy she should laugh. Then he looked at the young man and back again at Sally. "May I speak to you?" he said to the young man, and Douglas Bentleigh, charmed at what he chose to call the quaintness of the old man, said, "Of course!"

"In the pantry, please," and Jaunty went, followed by the young man.

The old man was a little quainter than he need have been, but Bentleigh was prepared to be amused.

"It's not exactly a pantry," said Jaunty, opening the door, "is it?"

Douglas looked round. It wasn't. On the mantelshelf stood two silver mugs, on a bracket a china mug, inscribed with "A Present for a Good Girl." As to the rest of the room there were shelves, but on the shelves there were books, not cups—nor crockery—nor glass.

"It's a jolly place," said the young man, inclined to please.

"D'you think so?" said Jaunty. "I prefer the garden with Miss Sally."

"Naturally," said the young man, stiffening. He was too much of an original, this old man. This came of spoiling old servants. Few could stand it.

The young man walked to the window and looked out.

The window was barred by a tangle of roses. "You can't see out much," he said to Jaunty.

"I can see farther than you think," returned Jaunty. He followed the young man to the window, and touching him gently on the arm, he said, "What was your mother about not to bring you up better? You mustn't make love to my Miss Sally. You can't speak to her on the road-side as is apparently your habit. She is different from other young ladies. Her daring is born of a profound innocence; neither her father nor I have seen reason to tell her what men are."

The young man swung round at these words. "What right have you to speak like this?"

Jaunty again laid his hand on the young man's arm, firmly this time, as though he would calm him. "Every right—the right of an uncle to speak to his nephew. I am your uncle—I'm sorry to have to tell you, but you've brought it on yourself."

Douglas Bentleigh looked in amazement at the old man. Was he in his right senses?

"My dear, good old man, this requires some explanation.—Wait!" and out of his pocket he took a large and exceedingly thin gold cigarette case, took from it a cigarette which he lit with deliberation. He threw away the match. Jaunty picked it up and dropped it into the mug which had been destined for a good girl.

"My uncle?" said Douglas Bentleigh.

"Your uncle."

"Tell me how."

"In the most usual and the very simplest of all ways. I am your mother's brother. My sister married your father—is that plainer? It's as plain as the Table of Affinity can make it. Your father and I were in business together; by that I mean we were in the same office. I was a clerk. He was senior to me in the business, in age younger. He was a clerk too. He had brains and should have got on. Your mother was devoted to him, I was

devoted to her. I cannot think how she came to call you Douglas!"

"Look here, my name is neither here nor there. I've got to understand this. You say you are my uncle, and you are living here as butler."

Jaunty raised his hand. "Not a butler exactly.—Wait! The most painful part has to come. It will pain you even more than the fact that your uncle is a butler, but it's got to come. You must bear it like a man. Your father got into difficulties. In order to get out of those difficulties he did what no man has any right to do, under any circumstances, to save himself or others—he took money that wasn't his to take, meaning of course to pay it back. He was unable to pay it back. The suspicion had to fall on some one; it fell on me. For your mother's sake I accepted the blame. I was forgiven by the firm—or rather they refused to prosecute. I was taken on again in consideration of my past services, and the whole horrible business was hushed up. Your father left 'to better himself.' He died before he was able to repay the money. Wait! When young Mr. Lawrence—as he was then—succeeded to a share in the business he was given his choice—under old Mr. Lawrence's will—of a picture or a piece of furniture. He chose me! Yes, it was funny, I admit; but I adored him for it, and I have adored him for it ever since. Mr. Loan, the partner, told him of the cloud under which I lived. He didn't care. Possibly, I hope, he didn't believe it of me; anyhow, he forgave me and trusted me. I went to him as librarian. There were no books of any value to care for, but in time there were two mugs, two porridge-bowls, and two babies—and very little money. So I became butler, or whatever you choose to call me. My sacred charge has been those two children. Their mother left them to me. Miss Sally can never marry my nephew—never! You may marry a duke's daughter—I cannot prevent you—you have the means to do it, no doubt.

Your mother has done well for her child—but you can't marry here; so the sooner you go, the better."

"Does my mother know?"

"She knows nothing beyond the fact that she has a brother she is ashamed of. I am to blame, not she. I took the blame to shield one dear to her. That I am a very bad butler she has no idea. She doesn't know where I am. Once a year I write and tell her I am happy. Don't spoil her happiness—or mine! Of course, what I have told you of your father is sacred?"

"Well, look here, Uncle—'Jaunty'—is that it? You must own that this is something of a blow. You can't expect me to sit down under it and say nothing. I have been kept in the dark. I have been brought up to look upon you . . ."

"Not even as a bad butler?" said Jaunty, smiling.

"No, as—it's beastly unfair on you—I hear all of a sudden that my father . . ."

"I am sorry, sir," said Jaunty, laying his hand on the young man's arm, this time with affectionate tenderness. "Nothing short of what I have told you would have prevented you making love to Miss Sally. She's got to marry well. She couldn't marry into my family—now could she?"

Douglas saw the impossibility. As a matter of fact, marrying Sally had not entered into his head, but he could not tell this uncle-butler so, who expected of every man that he should at least wish to marry her.

"I am afraid," said Jaunty, "you have little of your uncle in you. No dislike—inherent dislike of the other sex! I now recognise you. You have puzzled me. It was you who was at the restaurant with Miss Pamela that evening when, by the mercy of God, I took her away."

Douglas laughed, "No, no, it wasn't so bad as that. She wanted to dine at an Italian restaurant. Her aunt said I might take her. It was you, Uncle Jaunty, who made the

thing impossible, carrying her off in that fashion as if I had kidnapped her. You made us both ridiculous."

"It made me very unhappy at the time. Miss Pamela ought never to have done it."

"But now that you know she went out with your nephew it makes it all quite as it should be—doesn't it?"

"It keeps the scandal in the family," admitted Jaunty.

"D'you know I can never go to that restaurant again?" said Douglas.

"If no young man could ever again enter the doors of a foreign restaurant with a member of the opposite sex, it would be well," said Jaunty sententiously. Then he added, "If you will leave quietly now it shall be as if nothing had ever happened."

And Douglas left quietly; what else could he do? and, after all, what had happened? Nothing. Sally had discovered the meaning of a June day, that was all.

What troubled Douglas most was—when he married should he have to ask his uncle to the wedding? It presented social difficulties.

Sally watched his quiet going. He no longer laughed. There was nothing to laugh at. It was a poor ending to a delightful day.

As she turned from the gate she found Jaunty standing waiting, with Pomade Divine in one hand and a box of chocolates in the other, as he used to do in days gone by? Not quite! "Miss Sally," he said, "now that you are eighteen years old and a grown-up young lady . . ." It was too gentle, this; he started afresh.

"You have no right to speak to strange young men in the road and bring them home to lunch. No right, miss. Neither your upbringing nor Serena's cooking justifies it—or you."

"But, Jaunty," pleaded Sally, "he looked so trustworthy—so different from other men. And, do you know, so like you, Jaunty. Wasn't that amusing? He was . . ."

Here Jaunty heard Mr. Lawrence calling him and he

ran. Sally knew her father hadn't called, and she knew Jaunty had only gone to escape a difficulty.

Within a day or two a letter came for Jaunty. It was from his sister, Mrs. Benthleigh.

"DEAR JOHNSON,—Douglas has told me what has moved me profoundly. You are a butler—yet not quite a butler—I am glad of that. Are you happy? Won't you let me give you money so that you may live independently? Bob's partner, knowing how clever Bob was with money, has done so wonderfully for me. Dear Bob died *just* too soon. His partner said he looked upon my affairs as a sacred trust. He invested what I had, just at the right moment. I am a very rich woman. It has suddenly struck me that the money you borrowed from the firm has possibly never been repaid. For so long after that unhappy time I had no money that I am afraid I forgot all about it. As a butler—where you are—you can't have saved much. Let me pay it for you. I hear you are called Jaunty. That absurd name! I never liked it, nor did I ever call you by it. Now do tell me about the money and I will pay it into your account. Poor dear Johnson, you haven't got one, of course.

"Douglas tells me you sat in a pantry that is just like a nice smoking-room, and that there is a deaf parlourmaid who really does the parlour work. So you have lived in the family of Mrs. Arnold Monk? The new beauty. You didn't bring her up very well, from what I hear. But of course being a butler you wouldn't have anything to do with that."

Which roused Jaunty's wrath where the rest of the letter had left him unmoved. He must answer it at once.

"DEAR ERMYNTRUDE," he wrote,—“You are quite wrong; I had everything to do with the upbringing of Mrs. Arnold Monk—since she was eleven, I mean; in bringing her out, marrying her, etc. Up till then she was brought up by the greatest saint and the most beautiful woman that ever lived. If she is a little difficult to manage it is that she was born so. I did what I could—and so did her father. I must think over your kind offer about the money. Yes, I am a very bad butler. Douglas is a fine young man. Don't let him make a fool of himself over this caravanning business—old furniture, unless it has been cared for in good houses, brings moths into the house and worse. I

am glad to hear from you, my dear Ermyntrode. Mr. Lawrence is calling me.—Your affec. brother,

“JOHNSON JOHNSON.”

Then Jaunty wrote to the firm of Loan and Lawrence—he wrote privately to Mr. Loan—and asked what was the sum of money, with interest, that he owed the firm. He saw his way to paying it back sooner than he had thought possible.

Mr. Loan answered by return of post expressing surprise at the receipt of Mr. Johnson's letter. The money had been repaid years ago. In fact, a few days after he had left the services of the firm. Mr. Loan added that he was sorry Mr. Johnson should have been kept in ignorance of this fortunate circumstance.

The letter fell from Jaunty's fingers and fluttered to the ground. “All these years it had been paid—who had paid it?”

Jaunty thought of the pile that lay awaiting only the last coins. To whom now should he pay that money—the money he had saved? He would pay it back to Mr. Lawrence. In some way or other . . .

He found out the way.

He wrote to Mrs. Lombard:

“MADAM,—Mr. Lawrence seems to me not quite himself. Nothing serious, but will you come down and judge for yourself? He will be pleased to see you to luncheon any day you would care to suggest.—Yours obediently,

“JAUNTY.”

Mrs. Lombard having seen that Pamela Monk was to be of some account in the social world had opened her arms to her, and was quite prepared to do the same by Sally, of whom Arnold spoke in raptures. It was quite amusing finding two nieces grown up without having had any of the trouble of bringing them up. So she wrote to Mr. Lawrence suggesting that she should come down and see him and make friends with Sally, of whom she had heard most charming things spoken.

"This is strange, Jaunty," said Mr. Lawrence.

"What, sir?"

"Mrs. Lombard is coming down to luncheon one day soon."

"Will you make it a fortnight hence, sir?"

"Yes, but why?"

It had to do with kitchen arrangements, said Jaunty.

"Oh," said Mr. Lawrence, "these mysteries. In old days there was never any difficulty in having any one to luncheon."

But it had nothing to do with kitchen arrangements this time, only Jaunty had to make an excuse. He must have time. He wanted a fortnight.

He had his money to spend, and in order to spend it to good account he telegraphed to a well-known firm in London to send down a fitter with patterns, and a fitter came down with patterns and took the measurements of a bewildered Sally. The fitter went back to London, and in due course of time she returned with frocks that fitted Sally quite remarkably well—considering that she never stood still for one minute. There were cottons and muslins and evening frocks—all chosen by Jaunty. Was the world coming to an end? No, but Jaunty's savings were; and at a given moment he gave the signal, and back to London went the fitter—went, not only with the frocks that needed altering, but with vegetables and flowers and fresh eggs, and in a few days there came back the cardboard boxes for Sally, and she was the best dressed woman in Panslea, or so Jaunty thought. But not even the sense of being well dressed could please her now. She was hurt and angry—with Jaunty. In vain he displayed the frocks, spreading them out to their best advantage, pointing out the beauties of tucks—technical words failed him; but weren't they beautiful?

But Sally would have none of them, and she went out and sat on the common by the hour alone, and Jaunty was

as miserable as she meant him to be, and he cursed the day that had brought his nephew to Panslea.

A few days after the accursed nephew had been, he wrote to his uncle, and this is what he wrote:

"DEAR UNCLE JAUNTY,—I've been thinking a lot about you. Look here, things can't go on as they are—I didn't treat you the other day as I now wish I had treated you. I am proud of you. I am fond of you. You've behaved awfully well. I can't bear to think it is through us you have come to this. I must tell you—it seems only fair!—that I have never thought of my poor father with any respect, let alone affection. He made my poor mother unhappy in many more ways than you probably know. You spared her the crowning sorrow and I can never thank you enough; but we must start fair.

"In the first place, I am engaged to be married. I feel I ought to have told you that the other day. She's older than your Miss Sally, but in her own way, I think, as beautiful. Now look here, Uncle Jaunty. I want you to be one of us. Go abroad, travel—come back, and there's a cottage on the edge of the park at home, a jolly little place. Live there! The money is no difficulty. I have heaps. Just come and show us what we ought to be and to do. Hats off to you, Uncle Jaunty! —Your affec. nephew,

"DOUGLAS."

Over the reading of which letter Jaunty shed a few tears, as much at the dear stupidity of the boy as at his kindness. Leave Mr. Lawrence? Not for all the cottages on the edges of parks in the whole wide world. But he would like to show Mr. Lawrence that letter. He couldn't, of course.

"I should never have thought a generation could have done it!" he said.

XIV

"NOT the lilac cotton after all, please, miss," wrote Jaunty to Anne, and Anne put on a blue one and up to the Lawrences she went, and in the library she found a disconsolate Sally sitting dressed in a lilac cotton the very exact copy of her own, and she smiled. Of course, Jaunty had seen that the effect would be utterly spoilt and lost upon Mrs. Lombard had there been two frocks of the same kind and colour.

"What a pretty Sally!" cried Anne, and Sally smiled sadly. She would fain have been less pretty to have been happier.

"Heaven only knows," she said, "who's paid for it all. I have got three cottons upstairs, two evening dresses, stockings, hats, and Daddy Long Legs has never noticed any of them, so he can't have paid for them. It's a mystery."

"Pamela?" suggested Anne.

"She knows I don't care for clothes paid for by other people."

"Is there anything you *do* care for at the moment?"

Sally turned her mournful eyes upon Anne. "How did you know?" she asked.

"My dear child, your face is enough. Look here, Sally, isn't it rather ridiculous. You saw him once. You know nothing about him. He was nice-looking, but a little absurd. . . ."

"I liked that; he was more like father and Jaunty than any man I have ever met—then the twins, Pomp and Circumstance . . ."

"Yes, Sally; but do cheer up."

And Sally said she was cheerful really. She was enjoy-

ing it immensely. She was only trying to teach Jaunty that he must not interfere. She really must, now that she was grown up, do what she liked. Jaunty was growing quite impossible. Why should he have sent Mr. Bentleigh away? because it *was* Jaunty who did it. There was no doubt about that. Everything was perfectly all right until Mr. Bentleigh went into the pantry. He had eaten two pancakes at lunch. She had been able to do what Pamela hadn't; no man had eaten of Serena's pancakes for the dear sake of Pamela.

"I've no one to play with now," she said sadly.

And Anne, judging her to be in a softened mood, took a letter out of her pocket and began reading it. It was from Jimmy. She anxiously looked up from time to time to watch Sally's face. It brightened at the mention of polo ponies and clouded at the description of Jimmy's dog that had been mauled by a cheetah. "Poor dear Jimmy!" she said, and when Anne had finished the letter Sally wondered if Jimmy was often in love?

Here was Anne's chance. She didn't make the most of it; she said rather sententiously that Jimmy would never change, whereupon Sally exclaimed, "How dull for him; poor Jimmy!" and there remained nothing for Anne to say but that she thought Sally wasn't improving with old age. And Sally admitted it. She was growing horrid and horrid every moment.

What was Aunt Venetia coming for?

"We shall soon know," said Anne, and at that moment a car stopped at the door and out of it stepped Mrs. Lombard. "The same old place—the same old things!" she exclaimed as she came into the room, bringing with her an atmosphere of another world, a much larger world, a harder world, an infinitely richer world, but a world that lacked just what Panslea had that made it what it was.

"A kind little niece would have come to meet me," she

said. "What a pretty child it is, and so charmingly dressed. Where's your father?"

"I'll tell him," said Sally. "This is Anne Beech"—introducing her with a wave of her hand—"my clothes are copied from hers. Jaunty takes the patterns as he hands the plate in church; Anne doesn't mind."

"A great tribute, isn't it?" said Mrs. Lombard, smiling. "It must be counted to you for righteousness."

She walked round the room, making it seem absurdly small. Anne resented the way she did it. Anne felt nothing escaped her critical eye, no contrivance would deceive or amuse her. She wouldn't love the room as Panslea loved it. "You never knew their mother?" she asked, standing before the portrait of Mrs. Lawrence.

Anne said, "Unfortunately, no."

"She was very beautiful, of course (that doesn't do her justice), but she was the last kind of woman my dear brother should have married; he wanted some one practical to balance that ridiculous optimism of his."

Anne said they found it charming in Panslea.

"Oh yes!" said Mrs. Lombard, laughing. "A lot of unmarried women—oh, I beg your pardon! you're too young to count, and . . ."

Mr. Lawrence came in. "Venetia, Venetia," he exclaimed, "my dear, my dear—after all these years!"

"Don't say that, John; it ought not to have been all these years, but, after all, London is nearer to Panslea than Panslea to London. Your Pamela has established herself a beauty. But where did she learn her little—her astonishingly attractive little ways? Arnold is quite bewildered, poor man.—Dear John, it looks just the same." She put her hands on her brother's shoulders and looked at him searchingly, and as she looked she laughed, very softly.

"A little older," admitted Mr. Lawrence, "and a little shabbier, but just the same, I'm glad to say. You've seen Sally—and Jaunty?"

"Jaunty opened the door to me, I believe. I didn't look, but . . ." She released John, shaking him affectionately as she did it.

"But we all look at Jaunty in Panslea—he expects it; and Miss Beech?" Mr. Lawrence turned to Anne.

"Miss Beech? I have offended her, I'm afraid."

"Anne offended? Never!"

"No?" asked Mrs. Lombard, and Anne shook her head. She thought Mrs. Lombard too much of a goose to bother about except as Sally's aunt. Anne was wrong there; Mrs. Lombard was no goose, but how she could be Mr. Lawrence's sister was a puzzle. In appearance she was not unlike him. She had the same eyes without their twinkle, the same smile without its friendliness.

Jaunty announced luncheon. He enjoyed doing it, and did it after the manner of a toastmaster at a city dinner.

Mrs. Lombard sat down critical. She rose impressed. She assured John he had an excellent cook. He knew it. "You must be introduced to her afterwards," he said. "Poor dear Serena, she has done well to-day; she has improved wonderfully."

Sally kicked her father under the table. He told her not to be afraid, he wasn't going to say anything about Serena's leg. "It doesn't make her less of a cook, though, Sally, does it?" Now Sally was kicking her father not because of Serena's wooden leg, but because it was poor Mademoiselle out in the backyard who was responsible for the soufflé. It would never do if Aunt Venetia went out and said grace to Serena. Besides they were out to deceive Aunt Venetia. She had got to think they had an excellent cook. Serena was too honest to play the part face to face.

"And who else lives in the village?"

Mr. Lawrence said there were so many. Mrs. Lombard said she meant of people who counted.

Mr. Lawrence said there was Mrs. Hill.

"Who is she?"

"A farmer's wife."

"And an angel," added Sally.

Mrs. Lombard laughed. "A delightful combination. Who else—less celestial?"

"Janet Mason," suggested Mr. Lawrence.

"Oh yes, Michael Mason's sister. He told me. He's charming—deeply in love, I'm told. He's been making money lately. The Stock Exchange is booming—I'm glad. Tiresome sister rather—I'm afraid."

"He doesn't think so, I'm sure," said Sally. "She adores him."

"What a champion the child is!" said her aunt, looking at Sally and laughing.

Luncheon passed off triumphantly. As Jaunty put the coffee-tray down on the oak chest in the library, he whispered to Sally, "It's gone off splendidly, miss."

"Splendidly!" whispered Sally. "Sugar, Aunt Venetia?"

"Sugar and black, please." She raised her eyebrows as she tasted the coffee. "Excellent, John, *quite* excellent. John, I've been under a complete misapprehension. I thought you were happy but uncomfortable." She stirred her coffee thoughtfully. "I never suggested coming because I didn't want to put you to any inconvenience—to stay, I mean."

Sally was making faces at her father. He saw them but didn't know what they were meant to convey.

"There was my maid," went on Mrs. Lombard.

"We're very comfortable, Venetia—your maid need have no fears. She could dine with Jaunty, if we weren't grand enough." Mr. Lawrence's eyes twinkled.

"It's all very well to laugh, John, but there's no one in the world so difficult as servants. They know at once."

"We have no difficulties. They are quite comfortable here—perhaps more so than we are. We can't afford young servants, but we can have as many old ones as the house will hold. It's quite simple. I'm told people won't engage an old housemaid. Why not? If you have one to each

floor and give her plenty of time I don't see that age matters. Old ones eat less than young ones, and are quick to see their position. . . ."

Mrs. Lombard laid her hand on John's. "Don't, dear; you mustn't carry this nonsense too far. There are people who might believe you. Do you know what is said of you in London?—That you have a blind man to teach your girls drawing, a deaf man to teach them music . . ."

"Did they happen to mention a bedridden lady to teach them French?" asked Mr. Lawrence.

"But that is true, John?"

"And they stopped at that, did they?"

When Jaunty came in for the tray he looked at Anne, looked so pointedly that she blushed, rose and suggested to Mrs. Lombard that they should go round the garden together. Jaunty walked round by Mr. Lawrence, frowned at him, then on to Sally and frowned at her, which evidently meant that they were to stay where they were, and that Anne was to take Mrs. Lombard round the garden. Mrs. Lombard said she would be delighted. But really there were few things she disliked more than walking round gardens. Country people always gave names to everything in the beds and borders, and they were never the names by which she knew the same flowers in pots and tubs at those horticultural shows to which she and others possessing no gardens go—note-books in hand—trying to look as though they had planted and potted and weeded and sown and gathered all the days of their long London lives.

"It's badly kept, isn't it?" she said as she walked with Anne.

Anne said she loved it. To Panslea it was the model of what a garden should be.

"Well, perhaps not the garden particularly. Nature covers a multitude of sins at this time of year. But the front gate wants painting."

Anne admitted it, adding that the man who should have painted it had a stroke last winter and couldn't.

"Do you mean his workmen struck?—wretches!"

"No; his heart, and his dear old legs, and his brain—the only workman he has."

Mrs. Lombard supposed some one else might have done it; but Anne said that wasn't Mr. Lawrence's way. It was the old man's job. Mrs. Lombard dug furiously at an innocent weed with the point of her sunshade. "But if he *couldn't*?"

"Mr. Lawrence wouldn't let him see any one else do it. The old man lies in a window from which he can watch that gate," said Anne.

"My dear Miss Beech, I wonder if you realise how exasperating all this is to the ordinary prosaic and practical mind?"

Anne said she had some slight idea, from what Lord Bridlington said.

"Now he's a sensible man," said Mrs. Lombard. "And it makes him angry, does it?"

"He admires Sally very much," said Anne hastily, remembering her duty towards Jaunty. "What do you think of her?"

Mrs. Lombard stopped in the middle of the path and, pulling the end of Anne's tie straight, said she thought Sally extremely taking—astonishingly so. She shouldn't be surprised if she became a great success.

"You'll take her to London and give her the chance?" suggested Anne.

"Of course. I imagine that is why I am here to-day, isn't it?"

Anne couldn't deny it.

"I don't mind. I shall be glad to do it. The child has more sense, I should say, than Pamela. Pamela goes too far. She has no right to do it—yet! So recently married, her position unassured. It doesn't do. People are beginning to talk; she's an outrageous flirt."

Anne said she didn't think so.

"My dear Miss Beech, you don't know! Who did she ever see? Arnold Monk, and married him—the first man who asked her."

"Oh no," said Anne.

"Oh yes, if you leave out quite impossible people. Well, she's talked about now. I see no harm in the child and an immense amount of charm, but . . ."

"You will see Jaunty about it?" suggested Anne.

"Jaunty—why Jaunty? What has he got to do with it?"

"Everything."

"The butler?"

"Well, he isn't a butler . . ."

Then came the unexpected. Mrs. Lombard stopped, begged Anne to go no farther. She was quite excited. "Now wait, how does it go? He isn't a butler—*exactly*. Isn't that it? Now do tell me what does that absurd joke mean? It's all over London. It's making Arnold Monk ridiculous. Everything is 'not exactly.' If any one says Arnold is married, some one says 'Not exactly.'"

"It's a silly Panslea joke," explained Anne. "It has become the ordinary way of describing Jaunty. There's nothing in it. Jaunty isn't a butler—*exactly*. It's a silly joke of Pamela's."

At that moment Mr. Lawrence joined the two women. "Jaunty wishes to see you, Venetia," he said, putting his hand on his sister's arm. "He expressed it more politely. 'Would you grant him an interview—kindly grant,' those were his words."

"My dear John, the impertinence! Send the ridiculous creature to me."

And the ridiculous creature came and stood beside Mrs. Lombard under the trees. She looked at him as though he were some strange and rare animal. He was unconscious of it. Here was a chance of doing something for his young lady, and he was going to do it in the best way he could.

It turned out to be a better way than he knew. Very quietly and simply he took Mrs. Lombard through the last twenty years of his life at Panslea. He described to her the day on which, over this very lawn, Mr. Lawrence had led his bride. He described Mrs. Lawrence as she had looked then. He alluded briefly to the birth of the children. It seemed still fraught with mystery—the wonder of their coming. He described their bringing up—his small share in the great adventure. He told her much about Mr. Lawrence—much that was astonishing, much that was touching, much that recalled to her John's young days and hers together. He had been a wonderful brother. He was apparently as delightful a father—though an impossible one. This strange old man made her feel for her brother, in his sorrow, as she had never felt. She had never realised the depth of his grief, for she had never troubled to understand the height of his love. The death of his wife had seemed to her a sad ending to a very pretty fairy tale. Too pretty to be true—too charming to last. Jaunty had made her see that it must always last—it was too true not to last. It was lasting now under these trees; it lived in this old man's face.

Jaunty touched lightly on the subject of Sally's clothes. The colours that suited her, the styles, what she should wear at night; the way in which her hair should be done, and it seemed all vaguely familiar to Mrs. Lombard. She could see Sally so dressed. But how? It was impossible. Then she remembered Mrs. Lawrence's portrait. Jaunty didn't march with the times. Matilda was right. As he remembered Mrs. Lawrence he wanted to see Sally.

At the end of it all Mrs. Lombard said, "Well, Jaunty, I should like to know which is the quainter, you or your master?" And Jaunty must have asked for notice of the question if he would have answered it truthfully. Answering in a hurry he would have said there was little to choose between them, and Mrs. Lombard must have agreed with him.

She went back to London, and in the course of a few days Sally was to follow.

"It will be lonely, Jaunty," said Mr. Lawrence, as Jaunty addressed labels.

"It will be that, sir, but—as you say—if you bring young creatures into the world you have got to see them through."

"Did I say it? If you mean by seeing them through, marriage, I want her to marry the man she loves . . ."

"She shall do that. It becomes our business to see she loves the right one."

"I liked that young man who came the other day. You remember him?"

"Yes, sir." Was Jaunty likely to forget him?

"A fine young man—honest and straightforward," said Mr. Lawrence.

"Not quite a gentleman, sir, if you ask me."

"I didn't ask you."

"No, sir, that's why I made a point of saying it."

XV

ON a summer's day Sally went to London, and when the evening was come the men home from their work sat smoking in the doorways of their cottages, and they talked of Mr. Lawrence. One had passed him in the road looking lonesome like. Women sat on the walls of their neighbours' gardens, their babies in their arms, and they too talked of Mr. Lawrence, and what was he going to do now, Miss Sally gone? Miss Sally grown up? He would be lonely. He must feel strange. Could any one believe it? and she a baby a few years ago! Didn't most of them remember her christening? Her first Sunday in church, when she was three, how she had talked! Bless her little heart! She had asked in a loud voice, When the puff-puff was going to start? A pew was like a train, too—to a child it would be, not knowing any better. And when her mother died! Didn't she take on terrible, poor child? It was terrifying, wasn't it? And she would marry just as quickly as Miss Pamela had married. Most likely. She was more of a beauty—some thought. Others not.—Well, more pleasing? Yes, there was no doubt about that. Old Grandfather Wedgewood said she was her mother all over again—no difference that he could see without his spectacles—and no one like her mother had ever been seen in Panslea Church. There was queer old Mr. Jaunty wandering about as if he had lost a child—and he had; they all had, if it came to that. If praying for a child makes her yours, there wasn't one in Panslea that hadn't a share.

Anne and Janet sat talking in Anne's garden.

Anne said it seemed so quiet without Sally. Janet wondered how that could be when she had only just left. There had hardly been time to notice a difference.

"Everything looks different to me," said Anne. Janet was too matter-of-fact.

"I think," said Janet, "that Sally is very lucky. Every one seems to behave as if she belonged to them, and no one ever seems to think she can do wrong. I suppose she isn't very different after all to other people—except that she's prettier."

Anne said nothing, and Janet wondered what would happen to Mademoiselle. "She can't go, because she is partially paralysed. Can she?"

Anne said she wouldn't go if she were ten times a centipede and in full possession . . .

Janet hastened to say she couldn't imagine Mademoiselle a centipede.

Anne hadn't said she could.

"She will stay, you think?" persisted Janet.

Anne was certain of it. Mr. Lawrence would never let her go back to that home. "No; she will be here to teach Sally's children French."

"You think Sally will marry at once?"

That Anne could not tell. She was in no speculative mood.

"I wonder if some one is hopelessly in love with her, as there was with Pamela?" said Janet, and she looked to the heavens to answer her, since Anne's shrugged shoulders meant that Heaven alone knew.

"Who was hopelessly in love with Pamela?" asked Anne, not giving the heavens a chance. "And your grammar, Janet—it's atrocious!"

"Oh, I mustn't say—I promised Michael I wouldn't. But it's so long ago, isn't it? Grammar? I never could do grammar."

"Michael?" said Anne, "*your* Michael?"

"Yes, didn't you know?" Janet was surprised; if the heavens weren't telling she thought that Anne at least would have heard from some one. Anne shook her head.

"You didn't know?—Well, I don't think she would have

made him a good wife," she said, not daring to add, "but you, dear Anne, would."

There were moments when Anne was austere; this was one of them.

Janet looked at her. Anne stooped down to pick a flower. She threw it to Janet, threw it on to her lap. "Why don't you ask him down?" she asked.

"Would he come?" wondered Janet.

"Ask him."

A load was lifted from Anne's heart—to be replaced by a feeling of agonised shame. She had been imagining Michael in love with her. She had been discouraging him to the best of her ability, imagining herself kind, and it had been Pamela all the time! "Do ask him down, Janet, it's so dull."

She must let Michael see that it would be delightful to have him down as a friend, and if as a friend who wanted consoling, all the better; but as a lover he had proved dull—too much Janet's brother. "Do, Janet, it's dull," she repeated.

"Dull without Sally?" objected Janet. "Why, she has this moment I should say reached London."

"Are you and your brother alike?" asked Anne.

Janet indignantly denied it. "Michael says I am frightfully matter-of-fact. Why, he sleeps all the time I am with him," and Anne felt for Michael—and she closed her eyes.

Janet, glad at last to be of some importance in Panslea (she had felt sadly neglected), wrote to Michael and said Anne wanted him to come down; and of course he came down by the earliest train he could catch on a Friday afternoon. And at tea-time he was sitting in Anne's garden, drinking Anne's tea, and gazing at her with a pathetic gratitude in his eyes. Anne thought it very odd that a man so lately in love with one girl should look at another as he was looking at her. She didn't like him any the better for it. So she was cold and distant, and he

wondered why in the world she had asked him down if it was to treat him like this? So he hurried away, and as he and Janet walked back to the farm she asked him if it had been as bad as he had expected, adding that he was a dear, brave old thing—that she was proud of him.

“What was as bad?” he wanted to know. Everything was bad.

“Without Pamela.”

“Without Pamela? What’s Pamela got to do with me, or me with Pamela?”

Janet stood still in the road, and was nearly run over by the curate who came round the corner on his bicycle, without ringing his bell. She wasn’t run over, so why think about it? And she went on standing and looking at Michael in wonder and amazement. Had he gone out of his mind?

“Nothing to do with Pamela?” she exclaimed. “You said you were in love with her.”

“I?—Never.”

“Never?”

“Never.”

“Well, why were you so angry, then, when you saw her in the restaurant?”

“A motherless girl, that’s all. She hadn’t any one to look after her. . . .”

“The influence again,” thought Janet. “How strange!” Then she said, “It’s a very wonderful thing, Michael. It seems to me that dying is much less than I ever thought it was. I thought you were in love with . . .”

“That I can’t help.”

“Then, who?”

“Why, Anne, of course; always has been Anne, always will be Anne,” and he walked on quickly, and Janet trotted beside him; then he stopped, cut at a weed with his stick, and said, “She asked me down here, probably because you told her it was Pamela?”

Janet picked up the weed, jerked it into the hedge, and said she was afraid so.

"Well, Jane, my dear, I never thought you brilliant, but . . ." and he walked on, she trotting after him. "Have you ever tried to make her like you?" she said. "Do try, Michael dear—I'm sure you could. You look so nice and sunburnt," and with that very encouraging remark she marched up to the farm, went to her bedroom and cried.

And Michael sat in the sitting-room and smoked—and Anne went to the post office to get Jimmy's letter, which was due. The letter was there. Mrs. Stitchwort at the post office knew more about letters than most people in Panslea, and as she handed this one to Anne across the counter she said, "The young gentleman well?"

Anne said, Very well—she hoped. He always was.

"That's right," said Mrs. Stitchwort. "I didn't like the look of the stamp, that's all."

"The stamp?" asked Anne; "in what way can one stamp differ from another?"

"Lor', miss, there's a wonderful deal of difference, to my mind. A feverish stamp this was, I thought, put on feverishly like. Maybe I'm wrong, we've got to be wrong some day. There's the lover's stamp, that's always to be known. I could show you three to-day—but my position is official and I don't forget it. The lover's stamp is always to be known. The business stamp, that's quite clear—quite straight. There's the worried stamp. You've got to do with letters a deal before you see the signs. And the stuck-down envelopes. There's character for the reading! The suspicious writer, you know that? You've got to take a hairpin to it—nothing else for it. No room for so much as a little finger," and she held up her little finger to emphasise her point.

"I see," said Anne; "it's very interesting. Good-day, Mrs. Stitchwort."

"Mind, miss," said Mrs. Stitchwort, following her to the door, "I don't say I'm right about the feverish stamp—

the lover's stamp is so near to it—one of a family, I say. Good-day, miss."

Anne opened the letter before she got home. She leant on a gate to read it, and as she finished it she raised her eyes to the view she loved; but she saw nothing because of the mist of tears that were in her eyes.

She brushed them away and looked at the stamp. What nonsense! How could Mrs. Stitchwort have told?

Yet it was true. Jimmy had fever. He wrote a cheerful letter, a letter full of hope and comfort—but for all that he was ill. She hadn't the money to go to him, and if she had she knew it wouldn't be sister Anne he watched for. She went back to the post office and telegraphed to Sally, "Write to Jimmy; he's rather ill—cheer him up."

And Sally wrote to him and told him she had fallen in love, and she described how the young man had come to Panslea, travelling in furniture; told him how she had fallen in love with him for the sake of the twin horses—how Jaunty had sent him away—how she couldn't really enjoy herself when she was so badly treated. How, in spite of it all, she was enjoying herself immensely—how she hoped Jimmy was, in spite of his not being well. Of course by the time this letter reached him he would be as jolly as possible. Then she told him Panslea news, Jaunty news, Anne news, Janet news, and every news she could think of, and she addressed the envelope to Jimmy, stamped it and posted it. But by the time the letter reached India he was beyond the reach of all letters, and the Colonel's daughter—to help her mother—made a packet of Jimmy's letters that had just come out by the mail and sent them back to England. The only one she looked at with any interest was Sally's, because it was evidently written by a girl—it was a girl's handwriting, and not his sister's; hers she knew. Had there been some one else who loved him? And had he loved her? Was that why nothing had ever come right?

And the girl's mother coming into the room, and finding

her child crying, put her arms round her and said, "My darling, I wish you had the right to do this—I wish you had! But you must remember you haven't."

Mrs. Stitchwort had handed sorrow over the counter before this in Panslea, and many a time she had done it with a heavy heart; but this was worse than anything in her day. She couldn't hand such a message to any one, least of all to one who could never be a mother, so she said to the boy who waited to take the telegram, "No, Johnnie, I'll take it—it's for Miss Beech. You shall have the penny; it's a penny she gives you?"

"No, a bun; I likes buns," he said, and by the look of him he spoke the truth.

Mrs. Stitchwort took down from the peg her deerstalker's cap, put it on, and went up the village way. Coming to the door of Miss Beech's cottage she stood still and prayed. Inside the cottage she could hear Miss Beech singing. What could prayer do for Mrs. Stitchwort now? Nothing could give her the power to soften the telling of this tragedy. She knocked at the door. Anne opened it.

The first thing Anne saw was the deerstalker's cap. She knew it was kept for the woodshed and the backyard. Why had Mrs. Stitchwort put it on? Why had she come herself? She hadn't meant to come out. She had put on the thing nearest to hand—in a hurry!

"A telegram?" said Anne. She held out her hand. It trembled. "How kind of you to—bring it yourself."

"My dear, my dear, who else?" and then Anne knew.

She dropped into a chair and sat crouched there with her elbows on her knees, her face in her hands. On her shoulder rested tenderly Mrs. Stitchwort's work-roughened hand. "It came to me once myself, miss," she whispered. "I got the news straight of my boy . . ."

"No kind friend to tell you—gently. I am more fortunate—than you were," said Anne; and Mrs. Stitchwort went, and as she went up the village way her tears spread the news—first to Jaunty, then to the Vicar, then to the

children playing in the road, then to Miss Mason and Mr. Mason, and Mr. Mason turned hurriedly and made for Anne's cottage. Mrs. Stitchwort watched; saw him open the door, go in and close it. "I'm glad of that," she sobbed, jerking her thumb in the direction of the cottage, to which all eyes were turned. "It's what a woman wants—a friend that's closer than a brother."

Jaunty went home.

"There's bad news for Miss Beech, sir," he said to Mr. Lawrence.

"Then it's bad news for us all, Jaunty."

"There's special reason to mourn in this house, sir."

Mr. Lawrence said indeed there was, for he guessed what news it was Jaunty brought.

"Yes—and more than you think. He cared for—Miss Sally; I knew it. He didn't seem to be the right one—too young—and she didn't care, and now I'm not sure that I was right in preventing it. . . ."

"My dear Jaunty; how could you have prevented it?—Poor, poor boy."

"There are ways, many ways, of preventing things, sir, without saying anything. Dear, dear, I would give all I have to have him back."

"We would all give that, Jaunty—all of us. Who is with Miss Beech? Miss Mason?"

"Far better than that, sir. Miss Mason's brother."

XVI

DID Sally take London by storm? Of course not. Only girls in novels do that, or girls with very rich papas or very clever mammas. Even Panslea knew that. Sally had her triumphs. The old crossing-sweeper at the corner of the square had seen nothing approaching her, and a man drawing a bath-chair had shaken his head and said, "No work for me there," which was a tribute—less sweeping perhaps than the other, but a tribute.

Of course Panslea expected every one who noticed Sally to say she was the loveliest thing they had ever seen; but they were wise in that they did not expect every one to notice her.

Jaunty did.

Panslea was nearer the mark than he. Those people who noticed her admired her immensely, and many who looked at her once looked again. In London, of course, she wasn't nearly so well dressed as she had looked to Jaunty in Panslea. Pamela, for one, laughed at her cottons; but Sally wouldn't have others. She vowed Arnold had enough to do in buying clothes for Pamela. He had married Pamela, not her. Arnold knew that, but he wanted Sally to stay with them; but she discovered a duty to her aunt. Nothing could distract her from it. And the aunt found her a delightful companion. It was like having a field of buttercups and daisies to stay with one in London—so she told some one, and the some one she told it to was a man, and he understood. For he saw in Sally everything that was fresh and lovely, and pure and good, and amusing too. And the tenderness in his eyes deepened as her aunt talked of her, and she talked so sympathetically that the man told her things he had imagined he

would never tell any one but his mother. Then talking of mothers Mrs. Lombard told him about Sally's mother. The thought of that loss touched him very nearly. He knew what a precious thing a mother was. Poor little Sally!

Mrs. Lombard hastened to say that the father was quite wonderful. He had made up in an extraordinary way for what the children had lost. Neil Wentford was sure he must be wonderful; but could anything make up?

Mrs. Lombard maintained, "To a very wonderful extent."

Sally's social success was assured when—in answer to an invitation from friends to go to supper at the Carlton—she wrote that she was very sorry she was afraid she would be too late. She was going to a concert. That spread quickly, and socially it helped her enormously, because she was pretty enough to make it amusing. And it amused her aunt's little world, and all worlds like to be amused—big or little.

Sally felt as if she were country butter when she heard herself described as fresh. She wrote to Jaunty and told him she had heard one man, in the Park, say to another, "By Jove, what a clean-looking girl!" and it wasn't enough for Jaunty's jealous old heart, although to Sally, new to the smuts of London, it seemed a tremendous compliment. Jaunty took the letter to Mr. Lawrence, and Mr. Lawrence laughed at him.

"I think, sir, if you will allow me, I'll go up for the day, and I'll sit in the Park and see for myself how people look, and hear perhaps what they say. Miss Sally tells me the hour at which she walks in the Row. . . ."

"By all means, Jaunty. By all means."

But before Jaunty had arranged a day, the telegram for Anne came and Mr. Lawrence wrote to Sally.

Sally came in from a ball and found the letter on the hall table. She saw it was from her father and kissed it. "You ridiculous child," said her aunt.

"I'll read it upstairs, Aunt V.; I shan't thoroughly en-

joy it until I am in my dressing-gown with my hair down. Good-night! Life is one glorious, enormous, delicious joke—that's what Jimmy Beech calls it. You darling!" And she kissed her aunt, who was growing softer and softer every day, consequently much happier; and Sally ran upstairs, slipped out of her frock, shook down her hair, and throwing the window wide to the morning, opened her father's letter.

"MY DARLING CHILD," she read,—“You have known sorrow. Since your greatest sorrow you have known happiness again—it's the way of the world, otherwise we couldn't go on. Great sorrow has come to Panslea. How great it will be to you your old father, of course, doesn't know. But he knows your tender heart will ache for others—for your dear, beautiful Anne—do you guess, Sally? That dear boy Jimmy we all loved! He died in India of fever; he was your playfellow, wasn't he? So ridiculously and delightfully young for his age; such a man for his years. Of course, do as you like about coming home. Michael Mason is here. He is often with Anne.—Your devoted Father.”

Sally read the letter twice; even then she couldn't believe what she read. Jimmy dead, and she had said—a moment ago—that life was one glorious, delicious—It was his joke, just as the world had been his.

She heard some one coming up the stairs hurriedly. She knew it couldn't be Aunt Venetia, who, though stirred by passion or terror, could hardly rush upstairs like a hurricane. She went to the door, barring it with her arms. “Let me in, Sally—it's me,” and Sally opened the door to Pamela.

Pamela had come straight from the ball as Sally had done; but she had heard it there. “There in the full blaze of lights, Sally!” she cried, “every one looking at me.” She flung out her arms with a despairing gesture. And Sally thought, What would Jimmy have said if he had seen her like this? Dressed in flame-colour, with a band of diamonds round her hair, round her neck a rope of pearls?

And yet her frock, her jewels, were as nothing compared to the beauty—the tragic beauty—of her face. Sally was astonished who knew it so well—and had never loved it so little.

“Jimmy!” gasped Pamela. “Sally, why do you stand like that—as if nothing had happened? Jimmy!”

“I know,” said Sally.

“You know, and you can stand there like that?”

“What can I do?”—and if Pamela had had ears to hear she would have heard the desolation expressed in those words. Sally began to plait her hair, pulling the thick rope over her shoulder.

“Don’t do that, Sally. What am I to do? He loved me—and I loved him.” She paced the room like a wild thing, Sally’s immobility stirring her to fury.

“Why did you marry Arnold, then?” asked Sally.

“Why? Because—what was there to do? What was the use of waiting? Jimmy was poor—we were both poor—but he was alive . . .”

“And now he is dead,” whispered Sally.

“Don’t! Was he nothing to you?”

“He seemed a lot.”

“You haven’t the right to mourn him as I should have had—as I have! With hair that colour you can never decently mourn any one!”

“Have *you* the right, apart from your hair, Pamela?”

“The right that every woman has—who loves! O Sally, pity me! If it was you it would be all right—every one would be sorry for you; but what am I to say to Arnold?”

“Ask him to forgive you! I think, if you ask me, you’ve done Arnold a far greater injury in marrying him than you ever did Jimmy. Did Jimmy tell you he cared? Before he went away? I used to think so—then I thought you didn’t . . .”

Pamela made no answer. She left the room as she had entered it—tempestuously and tragically—and Sally went on plaiting her hair.

She would have gone to Panslea—but she hadn't the right. She hadn't imagined it necessary to have a particular right to grieve for a playfellow. "You haven't the right,"—the words came an echo from India.

Anne waited for a letter from Sally—waited anxiously—eagerly. When it came it was a stilted little letter. It expressed great sorrow for Anne—but it didn't say the one thing Anne wanted to hear; and yet in her heart of hearts she must have been glad that Sally was spared what she was suffering. She would be glad some day; but just at first it was the love of every one she wanted for Jimmy. Most of all the love for him that he had wanted. Poor Anne was at that stage of her grief when the sun seemed to show heartlessness in shining. How could the sun shine, and the wind play in the leaves of the trees, and bend the flowers to its wanton will, and the streams laugh as they ran to the river, when he lay still, unmoved by it all, who had loved life and all that lived—so dearly?

Jimmy had lived for the future, and the future to him had meant—Sally. He was gone and Sally didn't care.

Janet Mason had constituted herself companion to Mr. Lawrence during Sally's absence. It was very kind of her, and no one thought it so more than Mr. Lawrence; but there were times when he sat gazing into space, hoping that silence might drive the ministering angel from his gates. But no; Janet knew it was real friendship that made it possible for two souls akin to sit in silence; so she too sat gazing into space, and Mr. Lawrence was sorry for the child, and in the kindness of his heart he broke most of the silences and Janet at once became her brightest self.

She walked with him; she talked with him; she tea'd with him, and he began to long more than ever for the return of Sally, the feel of her arm in his, for their walks together, when Sally strode to suit his stride, and when they both laughed over the delicious absurdity of it all. Most absurd were the plans they made for the time when

they should both be old and live together with their dogs and their kittens, and their flowers and their books, and Pamela's grand-children—now and then; but not too often. Children try old people.

"I shall be so old, Sally," he would say.

"No, I shall catch you up—and if you are a little older than I am and should grow blind—too blind to see—my eyes shall see for yours; if your voice grows cracked and you can't sing in church, mine shall sing for you—my hands shall work for yours."

"What about our being the same age?"

It was ridiculous all this fond imagining, and when Janet asked him if he were thinking of Sally he had to say "Yes!"

"What about her?" she would say a little jealously.

"Oh, nothing in particular." For what of all that absurdity could he tell Janet—who was so sensible, and darned stockings so neatly?

Mr. Lawrence breathed the very smallest hint to Jaunty of his feelings with regard to Miss Mason's visits, and from that moment Jaunty, seizing what to many people would have been too small a thing to be called by even so small a name as hint, never left him for a moment. He brought accounts to be paid which in other circumstances might have waited. Letters to answer that need never have been answered. There was no limit to his resource, and Janet finally stayed away for hours at a time, then days; then altogether.

This distressed Mr. Lawrence. Jaunty was too violent. The poor child must be offended. So off to the farm he went, and he found Janet alone, darning, with a very large work-basket before her—forlorn in her unauthorised domesticity.

Mr. Lawrence hadn't been there five minutes when Jaunty appeared. A gentleman had arrived to see him. Would he come at once? Whereupon Mr. Lawrence told Janet how sorry he was, that the visitor couldn't have come

at a more inopportune moment, and she said, "Never mind; I'll come down to tea with you, shall I?"

"Do—do!" he begged, and off he went. Long as his legs were they couldn't overtake Jaunty at his fastest trot, and as Jaunty disappeared through the high iron gate, Mr. Lawrence had just come round the corner. Arrived at the house, he went into the library: no one there. Into the drawing-room: no one there. Into the garden. "Jaunty!" he called.

"Sir?" answered Jaunty.

"Where's the gentleman?"

"Well, sir, it's strange—but he's gone! I told him I shouldn't be a minute."

"What was he like?"

"Much as other men."

"It wasn't any one in Panslea? Not the vicar, by chance?"

"You are difficult to save, sir," pleaded Jaunty.

That evening Jaunty wrote to Sally. "Miss Sally, I am doing my best to take care of your father—but there are dangers to which the best of men are blind. Why don't you come home? There's some one up the road who is wondering her poor broken heart out. Didn't you care for that poor young gentleman? In any case I can't defend your father any longer. Your obedient Jaunty." Which wasn't a wise letter, as he afterwards learned to his cost.

And Sally came home as quickly as train could bring her, and that was too slowly. She didn't understand in what possible danger her father could be, but Anne? What did Jaunty mean?

She arrived home at tea-time. She flung her arms round her father's neck, then she was off up the village to Anne's cottage.

It was in the eyes of Panslea a fashionable Miss Sally who passed by their windows, a beautifully and wonderfully dressed Miss Sally, but she ran every bit as well as

she had run when she went away, and it was only when she came in view of Anne's house that she slowed down. At the gate she stopped. Had she the right to go in now? Had she forfeited the right? She walked up the little path, and turning the handle of the door, went in. Anne was not there. Sally passed through the cottage out into the garden behind, and there among the flowers she found her. Sally said nothing, and Anne said nothing—till Sally put out her arms, and then Anne broke down within their tender encircling—hopelessly, helplessly broke down. "I didn't know I had the right, Anne," said Sally.

"Who else, Sally, if not you?"

"Why, Pamela!"

"Pamela? Never!"

"But she thinks so."

"Then she thinks it without reason."

Then it suddenly came upon Sally—if Pamela hadn't the right—must she accept it? Could she refuse it? "Tell me, Anne," she said.

And Anne told Sally of Jimmy's letter asking her to come and look after her, of all his letters about her. Would Sally like to see them? And what could she say but "Yes"?

Anne fetched a packet and handed her a letter from it. Sally read: "I have been to the Lawrences. She was out. I waited and waited—at last she came in dishevelled and lovely; she had been to gather cherry blossoms to send to poor old Smithereens, their old governess. Pamela said, 'Tell the dear old thing I thought of it,' and I said, 'But, hang it all, Pamela, *you* didn't get up at six to pick it.' This is only to show you how unselfish Sally is. She fired up at once and said, 'It was the *thought*, of course; that was the thing people appreciated.'"

"Pamela didn't mean it in that way," said Sally, handing back the letter. "I remember Jimmy that day—dear, peppery old thing. Pamela was quite right. It was the thought Smithereens loved—the blossom lasted no time."

Anne said she was sorry she had shown her that one. "Read this." Sally read: "She looked like an angel from Heaven to-day. Her father sent her up to tidy. I longed to ask her not to, she looked so lovely, with her hair flying about, her cheeks pink as roses in June. Oh dear, Anne, what it is to be a man!"

"I never remember father sending me up to tidy," said Sally—which was beside the point, and not in the least what she meant to say.

"His letters are nothing," said Anne apologetically; "they were only to me, but they were full of you—always you. I thought you would like . . ."

Anne looked at Sally, and Sally saw in her hands, as it were, a cloak of sorrow. She was holding it out for Sally to slip into. Sally had loved Jimmy, of course, but not like this. But she couldn't say so now—least of all to Anne. If Jimmy had lavished all this upon her, could she refuse to accept it? At last Anne said, "You did care?"

And Sally answered, "I did care, I did—I only . . ." and she felt the weight of the cloak on her shoulders and she wrapped the folds round her.

"Did you give him any hope in the letter you wrote? but, of course, it never reached him. Would you like it back when it comes?"

Sally said she would. She was thankful it had never reached him.

"Did you ever give him any hope?" persisted Anne.

Sally searched her honest heart. Yes, she thought she had—she had! Yes, she said she would wait for him; yes, she did! (and so she had—in fun).

"O Sally, Sally, it makes all the difference! If only I knew Jimmy was happy and knew you were his, it would make all the difference. He did know? Say it again, Sally," she pleaded.

Poor Sally! It was so easy to say, so difficult not to say.

"Yes, I am sure he knew." The words came easily.

enough, but she was appalled that words that meant so little could have such an effect. Anne rose from her grief looking as though she had seen a vision. There was hope, love, everything that triumphed written on her face. It was transfigured. "I can bear everything now," she said, and Sally went back to her father—not running, as she had come, but walking with the cloak of sorrow trailing behind her—it was too big everywhere. It had not been cut to her measure.

Panslea looking out from its windows saw the child had grown up since she had been away, and how grandly she walked, just her mother all over again. "But sadder," said one woman, and another exclaimed, "Miss Sally sad—never!"

"Well, look," said the first woman, jerking the curtain back closer to the wall. And the second woman looked out over the pots of geraniums that crowded the window-sill, and said, "Well, maybe she would be sad after seeing Miss Anne."

"You found dear Anne?" said Mr. Lawrence, and Sally nodded.

"Were you able to comfort her at all?"

Sally said she thought she had been able.

"Poor dear Anne; I hope she will marry Michael Mason. Sally, had you any idea—that Jimmy . . .?"

"No—no, no."

"Forgive me, my child—I don't wish to force your confidence—I am thankful you didn't care for the dear boy more than we all did—we all loved him."

"Not as *I* did," said Sally passionately.

Her father looked up astonished. There was passion in her voice, passion in her eyes; she breathed quickly, she was distressed.

"My child, my child," he cried. "Not that!"

"Leave me—it's true, it's true. I loved him—I had promised to wait. Jimmy knew it, and it makes all the difference to Anne."

She was gone, leaving her father bewildered. He went to Jaunty.

"Jaunty, we were mistaken—it is serious with the child."

"Miss Sally?"

"Yes; she says she—cared."

"Since when?"

"She didn't say."

"It's since she went to see Miss Anne, to-day—that's it, sir."

"Jaunty, what do you mean?"

Jaunty said he meant what he said. "This sorrow mustn't be forced upon her." And the wise old man went upstairs and, listening outside Sally's door, heard the tearing sound of the child's sobs, and they tore his heart with their violence.

"It's late to cry," he thought. "She's doing it for her sake—Miss Anne's sake. It mustn't be." He knocked at the door.

"Who's there?"

"It's me, miss—your ridiculous Jaunty."

"What is it?"

"Will you come into the garden, miss, and talk to me—where we have so often talked?" and she followed Jaunty downstairs and out into the garden, to the place where she had stood as a child and told him that the world was a happy place after all. It had to be happy again—Jaunty was determined on that.

"Now, miss," he said, "this won't do. You will have sorrow enough in life of your own—you mustn't take more upon your shoulders than God lays upon them—we all have our burdens. Mr. Jimmy wasn't all this to you. You loved him as your father loved him—as his sister (a little less, of course) loved him. There wasn't a soul in the village he spoke one word to, who didn't remember that word. He had a way with him. I'm told his men felt for him almost an adoration. He was the best kind of officer England has, and he died for his country; if not on active

service, in doing his duty. He was all this; but, Miss Sally, he wasn't more to you than he was to most who knew him. You mustn't think you can blind me to that. If you have told Miss Beech so to make the wound hurt less you have made a fresh wound, because she loves you so well that when she gets better she will feel the wound of your sorrow for many a long day—and who wouldn't be wounded to think of a young thing on the brink of life, as it were, hurt to death. Miss Sally, you cared for Mr. Jimmy as we all cared . . .”

“No, Jaunty—a thousand times no. As he cared. And he knew it. Go, go!—and I danced in London while he lay— It was you who wrote. Go!”

And Jaunty went, and he wrote to Mrs. Lombard:

“MADAM,—Have you any reason to suppose Miss Sally was broken-hearted at the news from India? That she cared more than every one must care who knew Mr. Beech? Will you be so good as to tell me how she took the news when you broke it to her?—Yours obediently,

“JAUNTY.”

To which letter Mrs. Lombard wrote in answer:

“To JAUNTY,—I do not understand your letter. I did not break the news to Miss Sara. Her father's letter did that, and quite kindly, I imagine. Miss Sara ate very little breakfast the next morning and she had been crying. She spent most of the morning at the telephone saying she couldn't do all the things she had promised to do. She went to the four o'clock service at St. Paul's in the afternoon, and didn't go to a dance that night. The next day she read General Gordon's *Life*. Her eyes looked less red. She went with me to the Park and went early to bed.

“The next day, the third day from the day she received her father's letter, she came down to breakfast—made a good breakfast—read Rudyard Kipling's “William the Conqueror” and “The Brushwood Boy”—the choice significant—went to the Park in the morning, Ranelagh in the afternoon. She wasn't in her best spirits and wouldn't watch the Polo.—Yours faithfully,

V. LOMBARD.”

"I'm right, then," said Jaunty when he had read the letter.

But Sally walked from her own house to Anne's cottage and back again several times a day, and her eyes grew larger and her face smaller, and Jaunty watched in despair.

Miss Eleanor Doe worked day and night at a miniature of Jimmy, but she cried so much that she couldn't see what she painted. Perhaps that was why the miniature bore so little resemblance to him. Anyhow when it should be finished Miss Eleanor was determined that Sally should wear it on a black watered ribbon round her neck. Poor Sally! There was no escaping her sorrow; it encompassed her round about on every side. It was to hang round her neck all the days of her life.

Pamela heard of it and came down to Panslea. When she saw Sally what she had meant to say died on her lips. "Who said it was you?" she asked, awed.

"Anne," whispered Sally.

"And why didn't you know you cared at first?"

Sally begged Pamela not to ask. "I don't know—I was too young to know, perhaps."

"I thought I did and found I didn't; and you thought you didn't and found you did? It's a funny world, Sally. It has saved me a lot of bother with Arnold."

"I don't think marriage has improved you, Pamela."

"Improved me?" said Pamela, laughing; "how could marriage improve any one? It's impossible. From morning to night, it's all *me*. I am the centre of the entire household. Arnold waits for me to express a wish for something, and—I have it. I go out, every one makes a point of petting me and admiring me. Of course, I'm not improved. I'm frightfully spoilt—a dustman took off his hat to me and cheered me one day as he passed in his cart. Isn't that enough to spoil any young woman? I go out to dinner, I make the most utterly foolish remark, and the man next me laughs immoderately—it's not what I say, it's because I say it. There's a conspiracy abroad in the

land to spoil me. How can I be improved? I shall never be to any one what you will be to your husband, Sally. I shall always be a hindrance to Arnold; but you—you will go to India and have crowds of children and keep your complexion—you are just the kind of aggravating creature to do it. You'll be such a help to your husband. He'll consult you about everything—great big bridges and huge dams. You'll be so wise with those great eyes of yours, and your sons will look up to you and speak of their mother with bated breath—and their unfortunate wives will be up against an impossible ideal all the days of their lives. You'll live to be ninety without wearing spectacles, and you'll read as you drive in London, on a placard across the street, the news of the death of your favourite grandson—a field-marshal in India—and you'll say to the footman, 'Home,' and when you get there they will find the brave spirit has joined the grandson she loved on the farthest away of all frontiers. O Sally dear, life's a great joke after all, and the greatest joke in it is Arnold. He is so serious, dear old thing. I feel inclined to keep him for Sundays—do you remember the kind of toy we kept for Sundays?—Well, that's what I feel about Arnold. But, seriously, Sally, you won't let this—sorrow spoil your looks, will you?" and to her horror Sally began to laugh—and she laughed and laughed till she cried and cried.

Pamela was frightened, and she went to talk prettily to her father. He wanted to talk about Sally; but Pamela wanted to talk about herself.

"Dear old Daddy Long Legs, I did worry you, didn't I? Well, Arnold and I get on much better now. I like him very much—very much indeed."

"I'm glad, I'm glad," said her father. "I wish I were as happy about Sally."

"Sally will get over it. You can't expect her to, all in a moment. She is so romantic—always was. I think you should send her away for a while. She was immensely ad-

mired in London. I am very disappointed; there was a delightful man who seemed so devoted . . .”

“Not that, not that, Pamela—at such a time,” and Pamela shrugged her shoulders. If they would insist on saddling Sally with a love trouble, they must do it. But she had seen Sally on the night they had heard the news of Jimmy’s death. She was not broken-hearted then—only horrified and distressed.

So back to London went Pamela, and Sally stayed in Panslea with her sorrow, and there were moments when she began to think it must always have been like this. She must always have been unhappy without Jimmy.

She couldn’t feel like this entirely to please Anne—nor to worry Jaunty.

XVII

EVERY one was so terribly kind to Sally. She could have borne anything better. Miss Eleanor Doe wrote to her:

"MY CHILD,—There is shade and quiet in our garden. The scent of the heliotrope is delicious—or would it add summer memories, the saddest of all memories because the sweetest, to your sorrow? There is a dear little wren that runs, like a mouse, in the creeper over the house. These gentle distractions are ours, and shall be yours. Above all, you shall find perfect quietness and no questions. If it would help you I have a little story that I have told to no one. I could tell it to you. That shall be as you wish. I want, dear child, when you feel able to bear the strain, to consult you about the dear left eyebrow. If it pains you too much we will leave it as it is. It seems to be questioning. I may have it a little too high.—
Yours in deep sympathy, E. Doe."

Lord Bridlington was one of the first to notice the change in Sally. He called his wife's attention to it; but she said it was dancing. She knew a girl who had lost two stone in her first season.

But Bridlington wouldn't hear of that. Sally hadn't been fat to start with. She had danced all her life. She had run like a deer, had jumped like a gazelle. There was something more than dancing to account for her thinness. Lady Bridlington could only suggest a love trouble. An unrequited love? Bridlington was furious at the very idea. Unrequited love? Show him the man who wouldn't return Sally's love a thousand-fold! Lady Bridlington laughed. "You are very ridiculous about that child," she said.

The result of all this was that one fine morning Lord Bridlington started to call upon those of his tenants to whom he felt he owed the civility of a call, forgetting that

no landlord owes it to any tenant before three o'clock in the afternoon.

The first person he met was Janet Mason. She was not a tenant, neither did she lodge with a tenant of his, but she was as likely as any one to know why Sally was thin. So he stopped her and from one thing to another he got on to Sally. Had she enjoyed herself in London?"

"Oh yes," said Janet, "until . . ."

"Until what?"

"Oh, don't you know?"

"I know what is *said*—but I wasn't sure of the truth; from you I should know . . ."

"Well, of course, I do know it's true; but I didn't know she was really engaged to him."

"Dear, dear—engaged! It's too bad."

"Yes, isn't it? And for poor Anne, too. She was so devoted to him; but, of course, it's worse for Sally; although I sometimes think it's worst for a sister who has known him all her life."

"Of course, of course. Poor dear Jimmy! Good-morning, Miss Mason," and on he sped, unconvinced, but very unhappy. Not Jimmy Beech! He must have known of it had it been Jimmy!

The next person he met was Anne Beech, and in deference to her black frock and the delicacy of the situation he raised his hat and passed on. Then he came to a patch of red, blue, and white confetti scattered on the road. To a stranger passing that way the confetti must have suggested a wedding. Not so to Bridlington. He knew it meant that Miss Eleanor had passed that way, and he knew she must return that way. It was to make it a certainty that she had scattered the confetti. If she ventured, on her constitutional, farther than the actual village, she always scattered it at those corners where, on her return journey, she would be bound to make a decision. She had so much in life, but lamentably lacked a sense of locality.

Lord Bridlington waited a few minutes and Miss Eleanor came along.

"Good-morning," said he.

"Good-morning," said she.

"Not painting, this beautiful morning?" He quickly outlined a baby with the point of his stick on the soft sandy road.

"Not this morning. I am giving my eyes a rest."

"Are you so busy, then?"

"Yes; and when I am busy it means others are sorrowing. I would be less busy at this moment."

"You are painting the miniature of . . .?" he lowered his voice.

"Yes, of dear Mr. Beech—in uniform."

"For the one he loved? You are privileged, Miss Eleanor."

"I am indeed."

"She was engaged to him?"

"Yes, so it seems; but no one knew."

"Her father, I suppose . . .?"

"I believe not—at least, Mr. Lawrence told me it had come to him as a great shock. Sally seems so young to have been engaged."

"I wonder if she really was?" questioned Lord Bridlington, smoothing out the baby with his foot.

"Secretly, of course, and have you not seen her?"

Yes, he had seen her, and he had learned all he wished to know—that he hated to know. What business had Sally to be sad and in trouble when there was nothing Panslea wasn't prepared to do in order to shield her from all sorrow? For what other reason had they watched her from childhood? But if the child was in sorrow, all honour should be paid to the one she had loved and mourned.

He turned in at the Vicarage. The Vicar was at home. Lord Bridlington was shown into the study, where the Vicar was preparing his sermon for the next Sunday. Lord Bridlington apologised, but begged him to give them

the sermon he had given them two Sundays back. It was excellent and he wanted his second coachman to hear it, who hadn't been in church that morning.

"Send him to hear this one instead," said the Vicar; "it will do just as well—will do him just as much good."

"Ah, but you are not in a position to know how well. . . . However, there's something in all sermons for some one," said Lord Bridlington, and the Vicar agreed. This one might prove the very thing the second coachman most needed—or the fourth footman even!

"Now, seriously," said Lord Bridlington, "I have come to talk—or rather I have come about this memorial."

The Vicar asked, What memorial? He had heard of none—other than those raised in the hearts of all feeling men and women. This kind of sentiment bored Bridlington, and he hastened to say there had been nothing to hear, until this very minute. "Miss Eleanor Doe is painting his miniature—Jimmy Beech's. It's not enough. It may not even be recognisable—bound not to be—but a suitable memorial—in the church, I suggest." He paused to give weight to his words. The Vicar was visibly moved by them. "Now, what do you say?" went on Bridlington; "A screen, a window—or what? Think it over. I will get the best man to do it—no money shall be spared—and Sally shall unveil it."

"Why Sally?" questioned the Vicar, shaking his fountain pen.

"Because they were engaged—secretly. I have it on the best authority."

"Are you sure of it? Your authority, I mean?" he asked, trying his pen on the blotter.

"Yes, quite."

"And her father, he knew of it?" he said, unscrewing the end of his pen.

"It was secret—secret."

"And it is a secret no longer?" He laid the pen down and wiped his inky finger on the blotting paper.

"No, of course not. *I* know. Now, my dear Masters, there is no question of feelings. We ought to have seen for ourselves. Look at her eyes. Did you see them fixed upon you during your sermon last Sunday? No child unless she had been secretly engaged should listen to a sermon as she was listening to yours—I mean unless the young man had died. Her interest at her age was unnatural. She should be thinking of other things. Excellent as your sermons are, they should not appeal to happy young things—you can't mean them to. We, in Panslea, feel particularly responsible for the happiness of those children—I don't mean you aren't to preach to the drunkards of Panslea—you must, of course; but you mustn't expect Sally to take it to heart, and last Sunday she did. Therefore, my dear Masters, you had every chance of learning for yourself what you are now pained at hearing from me."

"It's only this," said the Vicar, "the happiness of those children! Who should foster it more carefully than I? I have prayed for them night and day—I knew nothing of this engagement—why, she was a child when Beech went away." He rested his elbows on the arms of his chair, and putting his finger-tips together, held them so, and repeated, "A child."

"How old were you, Masters, when the first pangs of love assailed you?"

The Vicar grew red. Bridlington had a way of saying things that was particularly disconcerting.

"Out with it, Masters; thirteen, fourteen—fifteen?"

The Vicar smiled. "Somewhere about that age, no doubt. But the object of my affections was always twice my age." He dropped his fingers one by one until his hands were folded in a position familiar to his parishioners. "Quite twice," he repeated.

"That makes no difference. The power to love—or fancy yourself in love—was yours at an early age; why deny it to Sally?" persisted Bridlington, who had been

ready enough to deny it himself, but the memorial had him fast; and the Vicar, in the interests of the church he loved, began to think in memorials—and as he thought he smiled.

A window? a screen?—Why not both? Bridlington was so rich, and young Beech had been undoubtedly possessed of very considerable charm. They would be fitting memorials to the integrity of his character. But what had Sally seen in him, and why at her age should she have fallen in love?

Who had spoken to her of love? She had been so carefully guarded, so shielded. She had seen nothing of lovers. Both he and Mrs. Masters were so careful, in their manner one to the other—so careful to set the young people in the village an example—to show them what a true affection could be—strong without demonstration, deep without demoralisation.

Lord Bridlington asked the Vicar what he was thinking about so seriously, and the Vicar said he was wondering what had made Sally think of love, living as she had lived, so sheltered.

“You talk as if love were a sin, Masters. Why, I’ve seen it dozens of times in this village—in the eyes of old Furlonger when his grandchild runs out to meet him.”

Mr. Masters raised a hand in gentle protest. “Ah, a love like that—that’s different.”

“But, my dear Masters, Sally can’t love a grandchild till she loves its grandfather—and you would be the last to wish it. Sally a grandmother, the absurdity of it!” the tender absurdity of it!

“You are looking far ahead,” said Mr. Masters, smiling at the thought, which he too found absurd. “We are now discussing the memorial to Sally’s lover; he can never be a grandfather—that you will admit, so it seems hardly decent to talk of Sally as a grandmother.”

* Lord Bridlington swore she would make a delightful

one. He liked to think of her as one, until he realised that he would not be there to applaud her.

"Very well, Masters," he said, "the matter is settled so far as the memorial goes. Sally's grandchild we must leave to time. You agree to have something of the sort—the best of its kind. Window or screen? If window, I would suggest a young man in the armour of righteousness—holding the shield of faith. It could be done with Jimmy's face, eh?"

"If not too painful a reminder to Sally," said the Vicar.

"Oh, it's not likely to be so like as all that; they never are. Personally I don't for one moment believe Vandyck satisfied the friends and relations of his sitters. We judge his pictures now as pictures, not as portraits;" and he went his way having, he imagined, impressed Masters with his knowledge of the Old Masters.

When he confided his scheme to his wife she said she thought the memorial would be very little help to Sally, and would only encourage Mr. Masters in church practices. Her idea would be to make Sally happier, not the Vicar, who was thinking of turning old Summers out of the choir.

"Why?" asked Lord Bridlington, looking very grave. These were serious things in village life.

"Because he sings out of tune!"

"Well, well! There might be worse reasons."

"Well, my dear Thomas, who is it Summers worships in church? His God or his Vicar?"

"My dear, my dear, you must remember the title. You forced it upon me. You must live up to it."

"And give up my God?"

"If called upon to do so—in church matters."

"Thomas, you are teasing me."

And Thomas didn't deny it.

Lady Bridlington said she would suggest taking Sally away—right away, for a time.

"A yacht, you mean?"

She had not meant anything of the kind, knowing her husband to be a bad sailor.

"You are a bad sailor, my dear," she reminded him, without malice.

"And what if I am. We have to consider these children—our position . . ."

"I know, I know," said Lady Bridlington. She realised her many positions.

"It's an excellent idea, my dear; we'll charter a five-hundred-ton steam yacht, and take Jack and all—anybody who likes to come. If we hug the islands of Scotland I can't very well be ill, can I? Yes, we'll do that. There's nothing in the sea to remind Sally of Jimmy—he was a soldier, not a sailor."

"He went to India by sea . . ."

"Oh, Sally's far too sensible to think of that—she knows he couldn't go any other way. I think I'll write to Masters; a mural tablet would do to remind Sally, and I will spend the larger sum in helping her to forget."

But the stained-glass window had entered the very soul of the Vicar. It coloured his whole existence. He trod on air as he walked down the village. He looked in imagination at his congregation through the wonderful carvings of an oak screen. No money was to be spared. For this he had lived. For this he had waited. Then it struck him as strange that his heart's desire should come to him through the breaking of Sally's heart.

As he thought this he saw her coming towards him. He judged her step lighter than it had been—her face brighter. But when she saw him she seemed to slacken her pace and set her face into lines of sorrow.

"Sally, my child," he said, and he put his arm through hers. She smiled. "I never knew—till now," he said.

He felt her arm stiffen within his; felt it gently withdrawn. He released it. "You always have seemed to us such a child."

Sally made no reply; she walked, looking on the ground. She made it difficult for the poor Vicar.

"Lord Bridlington," he said, "has been telling me—consulting me, rather—about the memorial."

"The memorial?" she whispered, "what memorial?"

"The memorial to the one you loved—'and lost awhile.' It is as much for your sake as for his that we want it to be as beautiful as possible. Lord Bridlington suggested a window—he thought that a young man panoplied in the armour of righteousness, with his foot . . ."

"What young man?" asked Sally.

"Jimmy Beech, my dear child—who other than he? Or, if that would remind you too poignantly, we will have another window—and a screen to him, exquisitely and wonderfully carved. . . ."

"Wait!" cried Sally, "why do you tell *me* this?"

"My child—who else should I tell? When it is for you it is done; from the great love we all bear you—to express to you our deep sympathy to you and Miss Anne. . . ."

"To Anne, yes; not to me. No, no, no!"

The Vicar looked at her in amazement; he sought to pacify her. But she would not. She must speak to him alone and at once. Where could she?

"I am on my way to the vestry; come there," and Sally followed him. As they passed through the church she glanced quickly at the east window, with its pink-lozenged panes of glass, so hideous, so dear. Never again could she lift her eyes in church if Jimmy in armour gazed reproachfully down upon her—oh, why hadn't she really loved him? She could so easily have done it. It would have been so easy to feel gratitude to these dear, kind people.

The Vicar opened the vestry door, and she went in. He followed her and offered her the chair, but she preferred to stand.

"Mr. Masters," she said, "I loved Jimmy . . ."

"My child, my child," murmured the Vicar, and shutting

his eyes he saw, as in a vision, Jimmy in armour standing . . .

"Yes, but not as you think."

He opened his eyes; the vision faded, and he looked out on to his world through the pink light of the lozenged window-panes, white where they had been broken and replaced.

"No, not as you think," went on Sally. "I loved him as I love you all—because you're so delicious to me—so kind! When he died I was very sorry; but it wasn't the kind of sorrow it would have been if . . . Then I came down here and I found Anne broken-hearted. I found that it would help her if she could think I had loved Jimmy—that she felt if she could think of Jimmy as having died knowing I loved him, it would make her grief easier to bear; and I love Anne—I love her so much that I felt nothing would be too great a thing to do for her, and I told her—I let her think—I had cared that way; and her dear face became all of a sudden—quite different. Then I realised what I had done—I had taken upon myself a sorrow greater than I could feel. Oh, if you could understand—and now I feel sad that I can't feel sadder; as sad as I ought to be. That's what's making me so miserable; I'm deceiving every one, and there's some one . . ."

"Sally, Sally, my child—why do you tell me this?"

"Because you—and only you—can save me this memorial. I couldn't bear it, please. I did love Jimmy; but he would have laughed—laughed till he cried, if he had imagined himself in a coloured window—dressed in the armour of—any armour," and Sally fell into a violent fit of sobbing, and the poor Vicar was distraught. What could he do? His first thought was of Jaunty.

Now Jaunty wasn't far off. He had never been far away when his Miss Sally wanted him. He had seen her going up the village; had followed her, had seen her walk with the Vicar, and had guessed that here was another kind friend strapping the burden of sorrow tighter and tighter upon

the back of the already over-burdened child, so he followed her at a distance, and when the Vicar hurried out of the vestry he found him waiting, where he often came to stand, asking what She would have done in circumstances that for him were too hard.

"Jaunty! You here?" said the Vicar.

"Am I wanted, sir?"

"Go into the vestry; Miss Sally is not quite herself."

And Jaunty went into the vestry and closed the door. He stood watching the bowed figure of the child he had loved and served all her life. Was he now powerless to help?

She raised her head from the register of baptisms. "Jaunty, I've told him—you know . . ."

"I've guessed," said Jaunty. "Why did you tell him?"

"Because of the memorial, Jaunty—I couldn't bear it. I should love him to have something, but it mustn't be anything to do with me—any more than any one else."

"Miss Sally, you're making yourself ill—what would She say? Is there anything behind all this that your old Jaunty doesn't know—or doesn't understand?"

"I'm so sorry that I can't be sadder."

"That I know—anything else? Your funny old Jaunty has known that all along. Is there anything more?"

There was a pause. Then Sally said, "It's no use trying to keep anything from you, Jaunty—is it?"

"No use; yet you have been trying—to do it!"

Sally nodded. Jaunty drew a step nearer, and laying his hand on the back of the rush-bottomed chair on which she sat said, "Another man, for whom you could feel what you have been forced to feel for Mr. Jimmy, if . . .?"

And Sally dried her tears and said, "Look here, Jaunty, this is ridiculous; come."

And she smiled. Her secret was in Jaunty's safe keeping, and somehow or other he would find a way out.

They walked home together.

"Miss Sally," said Jaunty, as they walked, "by this time

under ordinary circumstances it would be time you began to be more cheerful. You would be going out a little—to tea at the Vicarage, if you wished to go there. You would laugh occasionally. Your poor old Jaunty would say, ‘She’s getting better.’ He would go to your father and would say, ‘She’s better, sir, she jumped the pampas grass at the Vicarage to-day,’ and your father would say, ‘Jaunty, you are a great comfort to me’—which he will never say again until I take him good news of his child. You’re overdoing the part, Miss Sally, if I may make a criticism.” And from that day Panslea remarked a change in Sally. She began to take more notice of people and things, and one old woman swore to having heard her sing. When it was questioned she excused it, saying, “The young soon forget; yet it’s not so much forgetting as remembering without pain—that’s what it is.”

Lord Bridlington was a little unhappy about the memorial. He had seen the light flame in the Vicar’s face and hated to extinguish it. So he cudgelled his brains and wondered to whom he could erect a memorial—or dedicate a window. After much thought he decided to put up a window to the memory of those saints who had died in Panslea. By a saint he meant what Sally called a saint—any particularly good, patient, and self-sacrificing person, who had put up with a fractious, nagging wife, or rheumatism, or any other infliction. It would please every family, because every family might count their deceased relatives among the saints; and if any woman could rise to calling her late husband a saint because he had lived with her in such peace as to gain the crown, then she herself would be in a fair way to a window of her own, for to know oneself difficult to live with is to know all.

So Lord Bridlington wrote to Mr. Masters:

“DEAR MASTERS,—On thinking it over I have come to the conclusion that there are better ways perhaps of showing sympathy with Sally. But the church wants a window badly—I have thought so for some time. It has struck me—I mean, I have

very often been struck by the patience of the poor in Panslea, who have fought the great fight and have lived at peace with difficult relations. We needn't mention any names—but just put up a memorial to those who have set us a good example. It's an idea, I think; anyhow it will give the church a window, what it needs and what you want it to have. A young man in armour of course won't do; but almost anything else would. Something after the nature of Millet's 'Angelus'—that's what gives the old people rheumatism, working in the fields! Please let me know what you think of the idea. It's mine, nothing to do with Lawrence. It strikes me it looks a little as if it might be. The screen, I think, must wait. It would do well for me when *my* time comes . . .?—Yours,

“BRIDLINGTON.

“P. S.—Consult Miss Anne about the mural brass.”

XVIII

WHEN is a secret not sacred? was the question that Mr. Masters asked himself over and over again after Sally's astounding revelation. He wished he might go straight to Anne and beg her to lift the load from the child's shoulders. And yet it was for Anne's sake that the child had accepted the burden. What could he do?

He had to go and see Anne. It would give him the opportunity to see how she looked. If her burden was growing lighter might she not shift Sally's a little—change its position?

He found Anne in. Her beauty seemed rarefied by sorrow. From her eyes shone a wonderful light. Was it sorrow alone that could do this? Was it Sally's act of self-sacrifice that had given this wonderful addition to Anne's beauty? The Vicar wondered. He had seen the same light in the eyes of lovers, in the eyes of the newly made mother . . . but never quite this look in one sorrowing. It may be thought that every one in Panslea was beautiful. They were no more so than in any other place. But Panslea knew where to look for beauty, which makes all the difference. There is a beauty apart from feature—it is what Jimmy called "the light behind," and that light shone at all times in Anne's eyes—and in that lay her great charm. And it is a charm that a greater beauty than Anne may not have. She may if she likes—she must think as Anne thought—it's not so easy as it looks.

"I have come," said the Vicar, "to lay before you a scheme. It has been conceived in sympathy and born of love towards you and your dear brother."

The tears started to Anne's eyes; that, of course, was only to be expected. The Vicar would have thought it unnatural if his voice had not called up tears.

"We would suggest a brass tablet in the church to his memory—placed so that many of us may see it during service, and remember."

"It is very kind, very kind of you all—I cannot thank you enough. Somehow or other I cannot quite think of Jimmy in brass; couldn't it be something for the old people or the children? Something that would help the old and . . ."

"My dear Miss Anne, what is there? If you can think of anything, please do."

"I will ask Sally."

There was a silence, broken only by the grandfather's clock that ticked—tocked. The Vicar hardly dared talk of Sally now that he had the opportunity.

"Or else," said Anne, "a window; but that would be too much—too expensive; and Jimmy—somehow or other I cannot connect him with a stained-glass window; I should have loved him, though, as a soldier, if that had been possible. His favourite text as a boy was 'Quit you like men, be strong.'"

"A window, of course," said the Vicar hastily, "is very costly. . . ."

Anne nodded. She said she thought something for the poor and the old—or the children—Jimmy loved them all. "Mr. Masters, I am unhappy about Sally—I think she is grieving too much. Don't you see a great change in her?"

The Vicar said he did. He thought it was partly for Anne herself that Sally grieved. "If you could tell her that her grief adds to yours—she is so curiously unselfish, I think . . ."

"I could not bear," said Anne, "to think I had added to her sorrow. She has helped me so much in mine."

"The young must be allowed to forget," said the Vicar; "it must not be counted against them. They feel deeply; but they heal quickly."

The Vicar left, feeling he had done something very small; but still something for Sally.

Meanwhile Lord Bridlington had chartered the steam yacht that was to bear Sally away—away from her sorrow and from those who sorrowed with her.

Those who had sorrowed with her were puzzled. They felt they were kept in the dark. They had shared her sorrow, and now they didn't know the name of the yacht on which she had sailed; nor where she had gone. Half of Panslea thought brass buttons bad taste in one who had never yachted before. Jaunty said every one had to yacht for the first time. Panslea thought Jaunty had overreached himself.

They did not think a yachting cap suited to Sally's style of beauty. There were those in Panslea who rose here to say that her beauty was of that triumphant order, anything became it. But still it was extravagance—unnecessary extravagance. Ah, that was another thing altogether. There Mr. Lawrence was never to be understood.

He couldn't afford a thing he needed, and instantly bought another he couldn't want and didn't want—or if he did he gave it away.

Jaunty was miserable. Any one could see that. He walked aimlessly about, going to and from the post office at those hours when there could be no letters.

Mr. Lawrence was no happier, and he was going to be very much unhappier. But that he didn't know.

It wasn't that he was lonely—he would fain have been lonelier, for Janet Mason had resumed her kind attentions, and one day when he spoke in his haste of a lonely old age without his children, poor Janet broke down and tried to tell him that he had no need to look forward to a lonely old age . . . and when it dawned upon him what she meant he, poor man, was overcome with remorse and pity.

"My dear, good, and beautiful child," he said. (This was another case of beauty in Panslea; Janet wasn't really beautiful outside the radius of Mr. Lawrence's kindly imagination.) "My dear, beautiful, and good child,"—it

bears repetition because it helped Janet so—"you mustn't say these things—you spoil me. I have traded on your kindness—your generosity—you must forgive me; forgive an old man's stupidity. Here you have been amusing me when you should have been out in the world among young things of your own age."

Now to Janet Mason Mr. Lawrence wasn't in the least old. From the moment when she had first seen him, on that eventful day in London, he had seemed to her a veritable knight of old. His chivalrous manner had then and there set light to her imagination, and her heart had caught fire and had smouldered ever since.

His apparent helplessness was an added attraction, and that energy that had wasted itself hitherto in making dozens of woollies for dozens of babies, exhausted itself in a vague desire to mother this lonely man.

To poor Mr. Lawrence Janet Mason had been a nice, kindly young woman—a good companion for Sally—not possessed of too much imagination; but of great good sense. Now it was quite and horribly different. He begged her dry her tears, which she obediently did, or rather he did it for her. Then he asked her to come with him for one moment. Obediently she followed him. He sat down at his writing-table, and opening a drawer took from it a photograph. "I don't think I have ever shown you this," he said. "It is my wife as she was when I first met her.—Yes, Sally is very like her, isn't she? And Pamela too! Yes, just there," he followed the wavering line of Janet's finger; "I see the likeness very strongly."

"But neither *quite* . . ." said Janet; her lip trembling, her chin wobbling.

"No, not quite—no one could ever be quite . . ."

"I think I had better go," said Janet; and it was really better she should, because there was nothing more to be said. Yes, there was; Mr. Lawrence again said she was a dear, good, kind young woman. . . . She would have preferred "beautiful child," but one doesn't hear that kind of

thing more than once in a lifetime—especially when it isn't quite true.

Janet felt as well as she could feel under the rather painful circumstances, and she did not love Mr. Lawrence any the less for it all. She loved him differently.

Panslea, of course, knew nothing of all this—not even Jaunty, though what he chose to guess was his own affair.

"It had to come," he said to himself; "the sooner it's over the better. But will he make it final?"

Then he added, "He would be quite capable of telling her she was beautiful. . . ."

XIX

It was not easy for Mademoiselle to lie on her sofa with nothing to do and no one to teach. Jaunty suggested she should give lessons. Mademoiselle asked, To whom?

Jaunty said to Miss Doe and her sister. Why not?

Mademoiselle said, Did they want lessons? And Jaunty seemed to think that was not the question. It was Mademoiselle who wanted an object in life. So he sallied forth to arrange things. He went to Miss Doe's house and demanded an audience of Miss Eleanor, the weaker of the two sisters. It was granted him, readily enough. Jaunty amused the gentle sisters. "What is it?" asked Miss Eleanor.

"The French lady at our house," said Jaunty, and he vaguely touched his forehead.

Miss Eleanor shrank in alarm. "Not . . .?" she said.

Jaunty nodded. "Too much of the French language stored there—can't get out. It doesn't do. It's an excitable language, it ferments."

Miss Eleanor asked what she could do.

"Well, miss, what about your accent? Is it rusty at all? Because Mademoiselle has plenty of time and could rub it up in no time. There's nothing like practice."

"I could come and talk for an hour in the morning?"

"And read, n'est-ce-pas?" said Jaunty.

Miss Eleanor hesitated; she had never read French books—on principle. Jaunty guessed that, and he met her objection by assuring her that Miss Sally's books—each one of them above suspicion—were bound in brown cloth. Would Miss Eleanor come? and Miss Eleanor said she would—just for an hour in the morning.

"That's one," said Jaunty, as he shut the garden door

with a click, "and she's too good to hurry away—and too timorous."

To Anne's cottage he went next. He met her coming out. "Well, Jaunty?" she said, "any news?"

"Mademoiselle is moping, miss."

"Poor Mademoiselle! I must come and see her."

"It's the language that is doing it. She must talk French or she frets."

Anne said she would come and talk.

"She would rather teach," said Jaunty. "It's that that's worrying her. She thinks she's doing nothing for her living. Your French is too good, I suppose?"

Anne said it was far from too good. Mademoiselle should teach her. Jaunty suggested it should be easy enough to forget what you knew if you wanted to from motives of Christianity—or expediency.

"When shall I come?" asked Anne, prepared to forget everything in a good cause.

"Say eleven in the morning?"

Anne agreed; she liked the gentle little Mademoiselle.

"That's two," said Jaunty.

The next person he met was Miss Mason.

"There will be French instruction at Mr. Lawrence's house every morning at eleven o'clock, until further notice," he announced.

Janet said she thought she knew French fairly well . . .

"Well, miss, that's a matter of opinion, of course. If you will excuse me saying so—didn't you speak of gants de suede gloves the other day? It's mistakes of that kind that hurt Mademoiselle. At eleven o'clock, every morning. Good-morning."

The class was growing. It was enough to begin with, at all events, and a few mornings later Jaunty had shown up to Mademoiselle's room the two Miss Does, Miss Mason, and Miss Beech. Jaunty listened at the door, as innocent of curiosity as the roses that peeped in at the window. He

wanted only to discover by the sound of her voice whether Mademoiselle was happy or not. The first words triumphantly proclaimed her a satisfied Frenchwoman.

He stepped on tiptoe down the passage. At the top of the stairs he paused. He looked to the right, then to the left. Desolation on all sides—empty rooms—no echoes. Then he went downstairs into the library. Mr. Lawrence was there. Jaunty asked him when Miss Sally was returning. He learned with joy that she was coming back almost at once. Was she better? Mr. Lawrence thought so; she didn't say; she seemed more taken up with the sunsets than anything. Their beauty, he meant. Jaunty pursed his lips. He was sorry to hear that. There was poetry in sunsets, and in poetry there lay sadness. Poetry meant brooding. He had hoped Miss Sally was beyond sunsets by now. Sunsets came early in the convalescent stage.

"Don't let that disturb you, Jaunty," said Mr. Lawrence.

"And Mrs. Monk?" asked Jaunty.

Mr. Lawrence smiled. "Come here," he said; and Jaunty, wondering, followed him out of the room into the hall. It couldn't be dust on the stairs, because Mr. Lawrence never noticed that. Nor could it be a bird's nest in a strange place—nesting days were over, so why this mystery?

Mr. Lawrence put his foot on the loose rug at the bottom of the stairs. "Do you remember how the children used to slip on that?"

Jaunty remembered. They were quite accustomed to it now.

"But when they weren't accustomed to it? What did you do?"

"Do? Why, I nailed it down, of course." What were oak floors compared to children?

"Well, Jaunty, you must see to it—there's no hurry, but begin to look for the hammer and nails. I can't have my grandchild tumbling about . . ."

"Grand—child?" said Jaunty faintly.

"Now, now, Jaunty—be a man—be a man! I shall want your help; I can't bring up a grandchild without it."

Jaunty put his hand to his heart and found it beating quickly, then he said he doubted if Mr. Lawrence could.

"I'm glad of it for more reasons than one, sir," he said when he had sufficiently recovered; "that poor thing upstairs. I've done what I can for her—I've collected a class. That'll do to go on with. Now there's a grandchild to come she can teach that French."

Mr. Lawrence said it seemed a long way to look ahead. And Jaunty said with children you couldn't begin too young.

Then he went to his room, and sitting down at a table pulled out a drawer in which he kept his treasures and secrets, and out of the drawer he took a letter. He drew the letter from its envelope and, spreading it before him, he read these words: "With care there is no reason you should not live some years." A doctor had written them.

"*With care,*" murmured Jaunty, "with care. I must live to see that child.—I wish it had been another—with care—the greatest care in the world, could I live to see that other?—O God, it's all I ask, and for the good of the child only—well, partly—I ask it. Mr. Lawrence would spoil it."

Mademoiselle's class grew. Michael Mason joined it. He came down every week-end, and Jaunty noticed that Anne's mourning was relieved by a white scarf, a light in her eyes and a smile on her lips.

They were signs, and Jaunty read them, and read them aright.

Anne was finding happiness. What of Miss Sally? Jaunty was only waiting his time. The moment Miss Beech was happy enough to bear the shock of hearing it, he was going to tell her that Miss Sally was going to be happy too . . . or would be if God willed it to come right, and the young man proposed. It was only fair, and Jaunty

watched Anne's face from day to day. And as it grew in the beauty of happiness - Jaunty's grew happy in the thought of the happiness that awaited his Miss Sally. He didn't know what the happiness was, nor from whence it should come, but it had to come.

XX

Mrs. LOMBARD wrote to her brother:

"JOHN DEAREST,—Seeing you has made me hungry to see more of you. I didn't know how much of my heart was left in those long ago days when we were so happy together. I have drifted away from you and have been cast up on the shallows of society. It's not worth it. I can see that now. You with your extraordinarily different life are to be envied; but come and see something of our life, judge for yourself. Come and see what poor Tom used to call 'the young entry.' You will see some very pretty girls. Of course, you think everything of your own, but come and see what other parents can do without the intervention of an extraordinary butler.

"Douglas Bentleigh is going to be married next week—to quite a beauty, in her own rather peculiar line. When we were young, dear, a beauty was a beauty and nothing more. I want you to see what constitutes beauty nowadays. You probably, dear old thing, will think her the ugliest thing you ever saw, but you will be wrong. She's not pretty or lovely—she's beautiful. Do come! It will be great fun. You don't look like a poet or anything of that kind, do you? Heaven knows what your clothes will be like.—Your affec. sister, V. L.

"I want to talk to you about Sally. I am afraid she is behaving foolishly."

"Jaunty, shall I go and stay with Mrs. Lombard?"

"Why not, sir?"

And Mr. Lawrence had no good reason to offer against going, but he didn't say anything about the wedding to Jaunty. He had an idea Jaunty would insist on unearthing a certain pair of mauve striped trousers that lay in camphor in a bottom drawer. Let mauve trousers lie.

"I, too, sir," said Jaunty, "would like to go up to London if you have no objection," and Mr. Lawrence, of

course, had none. Why shouldn't Jaunty do as he did? It was better they should do something; they were getting into a groove.

"Go by all means, Jaunty, and look before you cross."

And Jaunty went, promising to look before he crossed, and to return on the same day and by the same train as Mr. Lawrence.

"We had better be independent, Jaunty," said Mr. Lawrence, and Jaunty wondered if it lay within their power.

"Yes, sir, we must try."

So Mr. Lawrence to his sister; Jaunty to his.

Mr. Lawrence arrived at Mrs. Lombard's house, and the butler almost betrayed himself by the warmth of his manner. He had the greatest respect for this tall gentleman who was so unlike the sister he served. He would gladly have opened the door oftener to him, or have taught a footman to do it, swinging it to its widest.

Mr. Lawrence followed him upstairs, remembering to ask as they went for the man's wife. She proved to be very much as usual. That her health was always much as usual Mr. Lawrence had learned from Sally; but what the usual was he had forgotten. A little knowledge had proved a dangerous thing had they not reached the drawing-room door.

"My dear, dear John," said Mrs. Lombard, "you suit London better than I thought. I shall be proud of you. Now tell me about Sally. What's to be done about Captain Wentford?" She drew John down on to the sofa beside her.

"Who is he? I don't know," said Mr. Lawrence, laying his hand on his sister's and looking into her face, seeing in it what no one else looked for—the simplicity that had been hers years ago. To John Lawrence it was there, but "dried up," he said gently.

"My skin, John? How cruel you are!"

"Did I say skin?—I didn't mean it. I was thinking."

"Why, John, have we seen so little of each other—lately?"

"Why, oh why? It seems a pity, doesn't it? But somehow or other children make one selfish. My interests have become so child-centred. You don't blame me?"

"My dear, I wish I could—in a way. I can only blame myself. . . . But Neil Wentford—of course you know?"

John Lawrence said he knew nothing.

"But, my dear John, we all know."

"I don't; what is it?"

"Why, he's head over ears in love with Sally—and he's such a dear, and has a nice place in Scotland. O John, surely you won't do anything to prevent so excellent a marriage for her? He's everything one could wish—that you could wish. So well thought of in his profession—so charming, so sympathetic. . . ."

"But, my dear V., poor little Sally is broken-hearted over the death of young Beech."

"Nothing of the sort, my dear John. I was there when your letter came. She was upset, of course, because she's a loving, loyal-hearted creature; but she was no more grieving for the man she loved than I was. Of course she was upset. There was romance in it—the poor boy dying away from home and so suddenly; but, my dear John, Sally was much more upset when Neil Wentford couldn't come to dinner—much more. Although I am bound to say she did her best to hide it. But, John, they can't hide it from one who remembers. Do you remember—do you remember how the joy of the whole world lay in sitting next to some particular person? Do you remember the desolation of the day when at some picnic you did *not* sit next the particular person? Ridiculous John, you have no right to be the father of two girls unless you remember that—and much, much more."

"Not quite dried up," said John, looking at her with a smile in his eyes. "I see it all now. . . ."

"Don't be ridiculous. What is not quite dried up?"

"Your love, your sympathy. . . ."

"Can nothing make you listen to me? What am I to do? Here is Neil Wentford pouring out his soul to me—really every man in love is a poet. What am I to say?"

"You must say what is true—that Sally has cared for some one else. It can't be helped. I am very sorry for this man. . . ."

"Don't speak of him as 'this man'; it maddens me."

"I am very sorry. Sally has gone away to recover, poor child—if there is such a thing as recovery."

"Recovery? Of course there is. Sally never cared. Who suggested it to her?"

Luncheon was announced, and John Lawrence and Mrs. Lombard lunched hurriedly—John for the moment made a mental note to go out afterwards and congratulate Serena; then he remembered.

"We mustn't be late, John," said his sister.

John said it sounded as though they were going to an entertainment, and she said they were. He asked who the bride was.

"Her name is Marr. She is very tall, very thin, very pale, with very red lips."

"I hate the type," said John, honest John.

"My dear, good man, you've never seen it. It's the very latest thing."

Mr. Lawrence found plenty to interest him at the wedding. It was years since he had been to anything of the kind. His mauve trousers had seen much service; but they had bent the knee at Panslea weddings only. All fashionable London was congregated here. The clothes were strange to him, the people who wore them stranger; strangest of all their manners. He forgot he was in church, and he wasn't the only one. He rose with the congregation when the bride walked up the aisle. She swayed as she walked. Her hair was dark, her face was white, her lips were red, and her eyes matched the long jade earrings

she wore. It was very clever of her, he thought, to have made herself into what passed as a beauty—passed every one, and not one denied her claim.

Douglas Bentleigh, of course, interested him immensely. He had liked him that day at Panslea. He had found him fresh and ingenuous. He was probably neither the one nor the other, but it was clever of him to pass as both, and no one would have denied him those qualifications, least of all John Lawrence.

The service was beautifully read, and the music was soul-stirring to one who had heard nothing of the kind for years. But it made him unhappy; made him think of days gone by; of Sally and Pamela as children; of things before that. Jaunty should have been there too to share this discomfort. It would have done him good to see these people. He would have been shocked; but he had got into a groove; he should come out of it.

Mr. Lawrence was on the point of asking his sister the name of a girl who sat just in front of them whose fine beauty appealed to him, when she nudged him. "The Wedding March, John," she said; "here they are!"

As if he didn't know the Wedding March—as if he hadn't played it dozens of times at the weddings of Sally's dolls. The bride and bridegroom passed down the aisle, the bride quite close to Mr. Lawrence.

She was certainly a type new to him—a disquieting type. Not the kind of friend he would choose for Pamela and Sally. Sally he knew wouldn't like her—Pamela, he thought, would.

Douglas Bentleigh looked . . .

Mr. Lawrence hadn't time to see how or what, for down the aisle came a tall woman who had once been beautiful and couldn't forget it. She dressed the part. John noticed her, of course, but his eyes were riveted upon the little man who walked beside her—a little man with a certain air of quiet distinction. John Lawrence knew his face. He must be a member of Parliament, or some one

well known to the public. Then the little man looked towards Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Lawrence met the eyes of Jaunty. Jaunty with a yellow carnation in his buttonhole and on his arm the hand of the faded beauty.

Mr. Lawrence looked at Jaunty; Jaunty at Mr. Lawrence, very gently inclining his head, remembering where he was, and looking as though he bowed from a sense of politeness to some one he didn't recognise.

"Do you want to go to the house?" whispered Mrs. Lombard to John.

"Yes."

"Really?"

"Don't you?"

Mrs. Lombard said she did, naturally. The young people were going off in a caravan, but she thought men . . .

John persisted that he would like to go to the house.

When he got there he hid himself as well as he could and watched Jaunty. He saw him cowering in a corner. He in one, Mr. Lawrence in another. Both in hiding. In time Jaunty was discovered. He was to take the faded beauty down to the dining-room. He did it. At least Mr. Lawrence supposed so, for he disappeared. After a few minutes he returned and whispered something to the bridegroom's mother. Did Jaunty imagine it was Serena who presided over the kitchen?

That John Lawrence was puzzled doesn't in the least describe his feelings on leaving the house with his sister. His mind was in a state of chaos—and down the back of his collar he suffered a handful of rice at the hand of Jaunty.

"Did you see that old man who had such a ridiculous look of your absurd Jaunty?" she asked.

"A look?" said John Lawrence.

"Well, I thought so. Did the wedding impress you?"

Mr. Lawrence said, More than anything in his life had ever impressed him.

"What surprised you most?"

"The guests."

"Yes, my dear John, a London crowd is an education. —Do you now see how Panslea stands still?"

He said nothing. He was off at once to see if Panslea still stood where it did. He could hardly believe it possible. Nothing could keep him. No entreaty on the part of his sister—no nothing! He must go, and he went.

At half-past seven o'clock the next morning Jaunty brought him a cup of tea, as usual.

Jaunty pulled up the blind.

Mr. Lawrence lay in bed and looked at him. "Jaunty," he said, "did you admire the bride?"

"Not my style, sir—not what I have been accustomed to."

Mr. Lawrence hadn't expected this. He had thought Jaunty would hesitate, would ask what Mr. Lawrence meant. Not at all! With his hand on the blind-cord, directing its wayward course, he calmly said the bride wasn't what he was accustomed to. He might have made up his mind to make himself accustomed, so calm was his manner.

"Have you no explanation to offer, Jaunty?"

"Have you none, sir?"

"My part is easily explained. I went to the wedding with Mrs. Lombard—at her invitation."

"I went to the wedding, sir, at the request of Mrs. Bentleigh."

"Mrs. Lombard is my sister."

"And Mrs. Bentleigh—mine," said Jaunty, not to be beaten.

"Jaunty!"

Jaunty stepped to the foot of the bed. There was gentle supplication in his manner. It said: Would Mr. Lawrence deal gently with the matter—whatever the matter was?

"That explains nothing," said Mr. Lawrence. "Mrs. Bentleigh, that beautifully dressed . . ."

"My sister, sir—overdressed, I thought. It is the mistake women make. She's risen well, but she makes mistakes in colours. Need we pursue the subject further, sir?"

"Of course we must. Come to the library after breakfast."

And after breakfast Jaunty went to the library.

Outside the door he stood one moment, and in his heart he prayed these words:

"Let not the simplicity of years suspect."

XXI

"WHAT was your father?" asked Mr. Lawrence as Jaunty closed the door.

"A doctor, sir."

"Of divinity?"

"Of medicine."

"A successful doctor?"

"No, sir—clever; but he didn't believe in medicine."

"That need not have made him unsuccessful."

"He confided his unbelief to his patients."

"Did they believe in him?"

"They believed in his good faith."

"Did their faith save them?"

"Sometimes."

"If they died did your father hold himself responsible?"

"He took no money."

"And you are the son of your father?"

"In not taking money?"

"Forgive me, Jaunty—sit down." He preferred to stand.

"Now, Jaunty, what does it all mean?"

"It means, sir, this, and only this. Years ago I was broken in spirit—suspected and unhappy."

"And innocent?"

"And innocent, sir; you guessed that?"

Mr. Lawrence said he knew it.

"Then you didn't forgive me? I shall miss that sense of forgiveness. It's a good bed-fellow."

"I have forgiven you much since—your face gave you away then as it does now. Go on."

"Well, sir, you took me in—you gave me your confidence. She," he pointed to the picture of Mrs. Lawrence, "gave

me the care of her children, your children. My sister loved her husband, I loved her. I shielded him to spare her. He died; too soon, in one sense. He was clever about money; if he had lived longer that money would have been repaid. He died with irons in the fire, but the fire was hardly kindled. A friend of his—he had very few—chose to call him unfortunate—believed in him, and promised to look after my sister's affairs. So well did he look after them that my sister became a rich woman. He invested at the right moment. He got in on the ground floor and sold from the chimney pots—business terms, sir. My sister wasn't a clever enough woman to question her right to the money, in the first instance. She and I had been much to each other in the old days. But her husband became more. She grew accustomed to do without me. She was content to hear I was alive and well. She didn't know I was a bad butler; she only knew I was a bad man.—Well, that's all, sir, except that by some curious chance her son came to Panslea, after Miss Sally, I thought—so I disclosed myself—the furious uncle—and sent him about his business, and that's all. About the wedding, I went because it eased my sister's mind. She asked me to the wedding, because in a sense she thought it made up. It would have been—snob-bish—not to have asked me; a wedding is the place where queer relatives may be expected—are countenanced even. Were *you* invited, sir—forgive the question?"

Mr. Lawrence looked at Jaunty; the familiar figure seemed somehow or other to have assumed heroic proportions.

"You old scoundrel! I knew you weren't a butler."

"No one but you, sir, would have thought of calling me one."

Mr. Lawrence wondered if they would have to make changes—wondered if they should part. . . .

"Where would you go, sir?" asked Jaunty, his old face puckering as it was wont to do in moments of great anxiety and perplexity.

Mr. Lawrence laughed. He told him to sit down. Jaunty said he would rather not. Mr. Lawrence said it wouldn't be the first time he had stayed to talk—he had often talked for hours at a time.—Well, not hours perhaps . . .

“Yes, sir; but I was always on the point of going.”

Mr. Lawrence asked if that made a difference, and Jaunty said all the difference in the world. The most respectful servant might stand at the door—so to speak.

“It's an impossible situation, Jaunty.”

“I have never thought of it as a situation,” he answered, “but if you wish it so . . .”

“The children—what shall we tell them?”

Jaunty said what was there to tell? Nothing! It would be impossible to tell Miss Sally that she had liked the nephew of her father's butler. . . . “One thing while we are on the subject, sir—that money? It was repaid a few days after I entered your service. . . .”

“My dear Jaunty, we have never worried about money, have we?”

“Well, sir, *I* have. What else have I worried about?”

“We never will again. Now, let's talk of something else. I wonder how Miss Sally is getting on?”

That was a subject on which Jaunty could talk for ever. He talked so much that he made Mr. Lawrence talk, and Mr. Lawrence told him that some one was in love with Miss Sally. Jaunty was not to be put off with a little information. He had to understand the question thoroughly. Well, then, according to Mrs. Lombard, some one was in love with Miss Sally, and Miss Sally was mourning for some one else—so her father said.

Jaunty knew she wasn't. He saw light in darkness. Miss Sally was unhappy because that some one she loved thought she was mourning for some one else. Here was work for Jaunty—no butler's work this—nor was the work cut out for him; but he was going to cut it out to his own measure. The young man, whoever he was, should hear the true story, or Jaunty's name wasn't Jaunty.—As a matter of fact, it wasn't.

XXII

SALLY in Scotland began to forget her troubles. She found she could loosen the cloak of sorrow, and having loosened it she had only to let it drop from her. She let it drop. Then ashamed that she should have done so, she picked it up and reverently folding it—in her mind—laid it away in her heart. It had been given by Anne and worn for Anne's sake, and as a memory she prized it.

Lord Bridlington watched her growing happiness as he might have watched that of his own child. He gloried in the radiance of her beauty. The spark of happiness glowing in her eyes set light to and burned in his heart. Even his wife couldn't laugh at him, for she too felt with him a great relief. It would have been to the everlasting shame of Panslea if it couldn't have made Sally happy.

It was all new to Sally—the yacht, the gulls, the hills, the sunsets, the wind-ruffled waters of the lochs, the driving mists. She loved the rainy days no less than the sunny days, and Lord Bridlington taught her to fish, and the old ghillie untaught her all she had learnt from his lordship, who knew nothing—and taught her all over again. But it was the Captain who would be teaching her himself, and Sally asked who the Captain was?

It was a frightful risk; but the old man was to be trusted. He said it was just the owner of the place—the laird—from whom the lord had taken the fishing. There was fishing for both, and Sally practised casting diligently so that she should not be disgraced in the eyes of the laird. She asked the old man how she did it. And he said, "It couldna be worrrse," and no doubt he was right, for he was learned in such matters.

Lord Bridlington prayed night and day that the name

of the owner might not be disclosed, for it was to be his surprise. His love for Sally had overridden all desires of his own for his son Jack. He had been told that Sally could have cared for Captain Wentford, and she was to be given her chance. And the sun shone upon the plans of Lord Bridlington and upon the hair of Sally as she sat on the bank of the river, and all would have been well if Lord Bridlington had confided in his wife, which all wise men should do—sometimes, at all events; and the sometimes with him should have been this time, for Lady Bridlington had other plans of her own, all innocently made for the pleasing of her dear Thomas, whom she had hitherto opposed with regard to the marriage of Jack and Sally. Now she would withdraw her opposition and work hard to bring it about.

So Captain Wentford walking along the bank of the river on that August afternoon—bad for fishing, but good for everything else in God's beautiful world—was against all she had prayed for and planned since she had set sail in the yacht. Her maternal heart went out not only to Jack in the future but to Jimmy in the past. Sally mustn't forget Jimmy until she could forget him in remembering Jack.

Captain Wentford shouldn't have come into the picture at all; but he stepped right into the very middle of it, and throwing himself down in the foreground found himself sitting beside Sally of whom he had been thinking for weeks. Sally, looking up from examining a beautiful piece of purple heather, each little flower of which was wonderful in its perfection, found that the world was no less wonderful in its larger and more perfect way. "You?" she said, and he said "You?" And in the English language there can be no word more tender, if said as Neil Wentford said it, and as Sally would have said it had she dared. But women so seldom say anything quite so tenderly as they would like to say it, because—well, they are women, and cannot. But Neil Wentford had no such scruples, and

he put his whole soul into the word. He was surprised into it—partly. He had been thinking of Sally as he walked along the river-side, because he was always thinking of her, and he had come upon her sitting on the bank of the river he had loved as a boy—had loved all his life. The river a man loves and the woman he loves—what more can he want?

And when the river runs at his feet and the woman sits at his side he is hard to please if he isn't happy. This too was the Sally he had met in London. She had been so friendly—so adorable. Then she had left London suddenly, and to a letter he had written her she had answered coldly, had begged him never to write again. But this Sally sitting on the bank beside him was the one he had first met, not the one who had written. He asked her how she had come there. It seemed unlikely that she had fallen from Heaven, although it seemed the only explanation. She said she had come with the Bridlingtons, that Lord Bridlington had taken a "beat" on the river. Ought she to have fished? She hadn't caught anything, she explained hurriedly. Then she remembered that old Donald had said the Captain would teach her. Would he? And Captain Wentford gave her a lesson then and there.

The deliciousness of it all—his hand on hers. That was necessary—to the good teaching! Yes, really and truly. She was a pupil just quick enough; not too quick. She couldn't do without a guiding hand. She thought she could. He knew she couldn't. She didn't argue; and Lord Bridlington coming to find her saw what was going on and tip-toed away over the heather, and behaved as absurdly as Jaunty would have behaved could he have seen his Miss Sally with the hand of the man she loved on hers.

It was the happiest day in Sally's life; just as Scotland was the loveliest country in the world, and fishing the most wonderful of occupations.

The old ghillie had withdrawn to a distance, and as he drew at his pipe his old face wrinkled up, and his eyes

blinked to the sun. His thoughts may have been something of the same kind as Neil Wentford's—who knows? Anyhow he remembered enough to prevent him making any suggestions as to what flies the foolish young things should use. Let the Captain fish with what he liked, or with none, which he most likely was doing at that very moment. That a fisherman should come to this was grievous; but a fisherman was a man for all that—they must all come to it sooner or later. It was best to get it over before the spring fishing, when all a man's attention must be given to the fish. Many a spring fish had been caught and lost since he had got it well over. . . .

Neil asked Sally if she were tired, and she said her arm ached a little, and for a second he held her wrist and was surprised at its slenderness. He laid the rod on the bank and they sat down, and a little bunch of heather fell from Sally's belt. He picked it up and put it in his buttonhole. "May I keep it?" he asked.

And Sally laughed. "Who do you want it for?" she asked, knowing quite well.

"For the woman I love best in the world," he answered, which was unexpected. "I shall never give it to any one but the woman I have loved best in the world—if I give it to any one."

"Is she very charming?" asked Sally, tugging at a root of heather.

"Very charming."

"And beautiful, I suppose?" she ventured—she was terribly unmodern.

"And—beautiful," admitted Neil. He looked at Sally. She bent her head and stretching out her hand picked another bit of heather. "Here's another bit just as beautiful," she said.

"Another bit of heather is very easy to get—but I doubt that it's as beautiful."

"And clever?" asked Sally.

"The heather?"

"No—who we were talking about."

"Very clever—in understanding, and in everything that most matters."

"Young?" asked Sally, stripping the stalk of its little flowers.

"You funny child. . . . What does age matter?"

To Sally it mattered enormously—more than anything at the moment in the wide world.

"My mother," said Neil, "couldn't be very young—not very young." And the evening became of a sudden all purple and gold—and Sally laughed. Neil asked if it wasn't beautiful—the golden light? And Sally said it was always like that in Scotland; and he said he had never seen it quite so beautiful, and he looked at her and she understood in a way that would have puzzled Jaunty. He would have said, How could she understand that the man meant *she* was beautiful when he most certainly referred to the scenery? Sally turned her head away so that Neil should not see how well she understood, and she thought she could hide the blush that burnt her cheek. But she was not quick enough; she couldn't have been quick enough, however quick she had been, because he knew it was there—he had meant it to be there.

"Look at me," he said, and she turned her face to his, and in one moment he would have known the truth and nothing could have shaken his belief; but before that moment came Lord Bridlington appeared to ask Wentford to dine on the yacht, and both Neil and Sally forgave him because of the message he bore. Lord Bridlington had great faith in moonlight and water. He was old-fashioned enough to believe few men could stand against it. Sally went back to the yacht in a dream of bewildered happiness—the launch cutting the golden waters—and she waved to the man standing on the shore.

He came to dinner; and after dinner Lady Bridlington asked Sally to fetch her a lace scarf, it was chilly. And when Sally was gone Lady Bridlington took the opportunity

of telling Neil Wentford that Sally was so wonderfully better—that her engagement to Mr. Beech, and his death—so tragically sudden—had been a terrible thing for the poor child—but she was better—much better. . . . “Don’t you think she is looking very well?” she asked.

And Neil said she seemed to him to be looking very well.

“And so pretty?” said Lady Bridlington.

“And so pretty,” he agreed.

Sally came back with the scarf. Neil Wentford looked at her long and earnestly. If he had but seen the look she would have given him by the river, he need never have looked again to learn what he wanted to know. Now it was a bewildered Sally who met his stern gaze, and she told him nothing of what he wanted to know. She looked from him to Lady Bridlington—from Lady Bridlington to him. Lord Bridlington called to his wife and she went, and Sally was left with Neil Wentford. “May I smoke?” he asked.

“Of course,” she said. “Why not?”

“Why not that as well as anything else?” and he smoked and said nothing.

“How dark the hills look,” said Sally, feeling that some one must speak—and it is always the woman who speaks.

“Very dark—a storm coming, I think. They come up suddenly in this part of the world.”

And again they sat in silence. At last he said he must be going. “I only came north to-day, and I have so much to do. Will you say good-night to the Bridlingtons for me?”

Sally nodded.

“Perhaps—you may wonder,” he hesitated; “I’m not very good at expressing myself. I’m so sorry—you have had such a sorrow. I didn’t know—or of course I wouldn’t . . .”

“Don’t, please don’t!” cried Sally, and imploringly she held out her hand.

He took it and held it. "You understand?" he asked, releasing it. "I didn't know."

She nodded.

"And the heather, may I keep it?"

She nodded again.

"I will send it to the woman I love best in the world. Good-night—good-bye," and he stepped down into the launch and away he went down the pathway of silver—into the darkness, and was lost to sight. Sally went to bed.

Two hours later Lord Bridlington, thinking the young people had been alone long enough for even the modern man to make up his mind, came to find them, and he found no one; but he was told Captain Wentford had gone two hours back, soon after dinner. Lord Bridlington went to his wife a sad and perplexed man. She could offer him no comfort, and was afraid to offer an explanation.

XXIII

SALLY went back to Panslea, and she looked no happier than she had looked when she went away. Jaunty watched her, and he knew things were wrong. He must wait. He had faith—to his faith he must add patience.

If he waited long enough he must find out. He waited, and Sally got a letter. Now was his chance. He watched her. She hid the letter instead of reading it. That was significant. Jaunty must know who the letter was from, and when he knew who it was from, he must know what it said. It was the clue he wanted.

A few hours later Sally's eyes were red with crying, which was more than he could stand. His moral sense ceased to exist. He determined to do what no one has any right to do—neither father nor mother, nor brother nor sister, and certainly no butler—however bad a butler he may chance to be. He determined to read that letter. The intention was his; but he was saved committing the actual sin by the puppy taking it upon himself. He came to Jaunty, and lying down at his feet, lifted pathetic, loving eyes, and swallowed as best he could, but the paper in his mouth made it difficult.

"Drop it," said Jaunty, and the puppy dropped it. It was a letter; that Jaunty saw at once. And as any letter might at such a time as this be the one he was looking for, he read it. Having read it, he sat down. The beating of his heart frightened him. He had never read such a letter, nor had he credited any man with the power to write it. He had underrated the force of love. That his Miss Sally should receive such a letter . . . !

Hearing her coming he replaced the letter between the paws of the puppy, dared him to move, and when she came

into the room he said quite calmly, "Will you take that paper, miss? It's bad for the puppy—bad for his digestion, bad for his morals—he takes things out of the waste-paper basket." Jaunty knew the puppy hadn't taken this letter from there. Sally pounced upon the puppy and seized the letter she had lost, and had been looking for, and was thankful Jaunty hadn't seen it.

But Jaunty had read it, and it was the first love-letter he had ever read, and it had opened to him the gates of a new world. He had let Miss Pamela marry, when he hadn't even known of the existence of a love like this. He had robbed her of her right. This was a love of which poets wrote, except that it sacrificed nothing to rhyme—and it was reasonable. What could his Miss Sally say to such a letter? How would she answer it? She couldn't refuse a love like this, and yet she wouldn't know what to say and he couldn't help her. He couldn't consult Mr. Lawrence because love was a subject on which he would not have Mr. Lawrence dwell, because of the memories it must arouse in his heart.

If the letter had made Miss Sally happy she would not have cried. She must have cried because she could not answer the letter as she would like to answer it. Jaunty would see that the answer was what it ought to be. He waited until she wrote it. Then when she went to post it herself, he followed her.

"Miss," he said, "the grass is wet. I will post . . ." and when she answered, "No, thank you, Jaunty, I will post it myself," he said "Miss Sally!" in such a voice that the past years were as nothing, and she was in a pinafore again, with socks and bare legs and bruised knees, and obediently she handed the letter to him.

"It's very important," she faltered.

He said he would see to it. He walked to the post office, read all about the recruits His Majesty wanted; all the advantages offered; then slipped the letter into his pocket,

and went back and asked Mr. Lawrence if he might go up to London to see his sister.

"Don't ask me, Jaunty; of course. I have told you over and over again—you are perfectly independent. Please don't do it again."

There was one thing that had rankled in Jaunty's mind since the reading of the illuminating letter, and that was his attitude towards Matilda. Had he misjudged her? Had such a letter as this deceived her? Was it in response to such a letter as this that she had yielded? Jaunty was distressed. He had despised Matilda, and Matilda perhaps had inspired poetry. Before he went to London he went upstairs to what was called "the workroom" (he had always thought it was little work that was done there). He knocked at the door—a voice said "Come in," and he went in. At a table in the window sat Matilda. The outline of her figure was austere. On the table before her were three photographs. One she held out at arm's length, and she was gazing at it as Jaunty came in.

"What are you looking at?" he asked.

"I am looking to see which I like best—this one of Miss Pamela, or this one of Miss Sally."

"Or this one of——?" said Jaunty.

Matilda turned the third photograph face downwards and put her hand over it. "That's mine, Mr. Jaunty."

"Ah, Matilda, Matilda, the years are passing, and we might have been better friends."

Matilda looked at Jaunty, then said gruffly, "I'm willing enough," and she turned the photograph face up and withdrew her hand. Jaunty saw the likeness of a very ugly baby, improperly clothed.

"Poor Matilda," he said gently, "the grandchild will be a solace to us both in our old age."

Then he went to London; but not to see his sister, because he had only time to drive across London and catch a train from Paddington. Sally's letter lay next his heart, which was beating very unevenly.

In a garden which must be the embodiment of the dreams of most of us walked an elderly woman with her son. Jaunty was making for that garden. The mother and son walked on a grass path between borders of autumn flowers—old-fashioned flowers—and they talked softly of something very near to the hearts of both. The son was careful to walk as slowly as his mother wished to walk; she was anxious to walk as quickly as he could walk, and they both laughed over it. She at his gentleness because she loved it; he at her impetuosity because he loved her. But they grew serious as they walked, and they talked earnestly.

"You thought she cared?" asked his mother, suiting her steps to his.

"I was quite certain of it, at first; then things went wrong. But afterwards . . ."

"And now?"

"You have heard what I was told."

"You heard it on good authority?"

"From one who knows her intimately."

"You think she cannot be grieving perhaps from a sense of remorse?"

"How could she?"

"Ah, my dear, my dear, girls—young girls—do strange things from a sense of imagined duty. You have the gift of spoiling women," she pressed his arm gently, "but I doubt that you understand them."

"There can hardly be room for misunderstanding here—she was engaged, or she was not engaged. If I am certain she *was* . . .?"

"I should still be certain she wasn't."

"Because you think, dearest, that all women must feel for me as you do . . ."

"One woman must, dear. It is said there is jealousy in the hearts of most women in their love for their sons; but mine is a jealousy that would gain for you the woman you love—not keep her from you. Tell me, what kind of a woman is she?"

And the son spoke as foolishly perhaps as ever son spoke to any mother, and the mother's eyes filled with tears at his words, so tender was his folly. Could any woman live up to this ideal? Could Sally be all this—all he demanded of her? She must indeed be a wonderful child-woman, which, of course, she was.

"She would love you, mother." Tenderest of all flatteries, this!

"I hope so, my son. I love her already, both for her own sake and for the sake of that dear mother who had to leave such a child."

"They say she was wonderful."

"And the father?"

"He is very unlike other people."

"Not too much unlike, I hope?" said the mother, not without worldly wisdom.

"Well, the world would be a better place if there were more like him."

"Ah, that's all I wanted to know.—And you have written to the child, as I asked you to do?"

"As you asked me to—I did."

"You wrote very kindly, tenderly—ready to believe and to understand?"

"I am ready to believe."

"Then some day—Sally will walk in this garden and she will love it."

"Mother, why do you say that?"

"Because, I see her, that's why. I see her quite plainly. Tall and straight—divinely fair—tell me if I am wrong. Fair, and she holds me up in her arms—her strong, young arms—as I grow old and feeble, and she humours me so sweetly. She begs me to tell her all about you, Neil, when you were a boy, and I tell her everything I can remember, and much more; and I talk on and on, Sally listening with bent head and a smile on her lips—till the shadows grow long in the garden, and the yew hedges are black in the twilight, and the birds go to rest, and your old mother

falls asleep, and you and Sally bid me good-night—a tender good-night . . .”

“My dear, darling mother!”

And his mother laughed. “Who is that, Neil?”

Over the grass towards them walked an old man. “See what he wants, dear,” she said, resenting the intrusion. And Neil went across the grass towards Jaunty.

“Captain Wentford?” asked Jaunty, baring his head and standing among the flowers as old-fashioned as himself.

“Yes, I’m Captain Wentford. I don’t think I know you.”

“Not yet, sir—but I would like to speak to you.”

“Well, what is it?”

Jaunty said he must ask to see him alone—he was sorry.

“Dear Neil, I will go,” and Mrs. Wentford left them.

Captain Wentford asked Jaunty to sit down; but he preferred to stand. “I am Jaunty, sir,” he said, “butler—not exactly butler—in the family of Mr. Lawrence.”

“Jaunty!” exclaimed Captain Wentford, “I’m delighted to see you—of course I have heard of you,” and Jaunty found his hand clasped fast in the hand of this tall, bronzed soldier; in the hand that had held the pen—in the hand that had written that stupendous love-letter—in the hand of Miss Sally’s lover.

“Sir, sir—I am overcome by your kindness. I have brought you a letter from Miss Sally.”

“She sent you?”

“No, sir, I came. I ask you to read this letter in my presence—I ask you when you have read it to tell me . . .”

“What right have you to ask this?”

“The right love gives. Sir, I demand the right. I am old—you cannot disappoint me.”

Captain Wentford took Sally’s letter, and walking away left Jaunty alone. He stood there in the midst of the flowers. He had dared much. Was he to have dared in vain?

A gentle voice said, "Have you brought good or bad news?"

Jaunty turned and found Mrs. Wentford beside him. He revered her beauty and goodness. He recognised it—the same goodness that had been his lady's, the same gentleness. "I cannot say, ma'am. I have brought a letter from my young lady."

"You do not know what it says?"

"I do not, ma'am; but I have good reason to think that what it says is not the truth—and I have come to enforce right."

"She cares, then?" asked Mrs. Wentford, wondering greatly that she could ask the question of a stranger; but the stranger was so simple an old man, he spoke with such conviction. "She cares?" she repeated.

"She most certainly cares, ma'am; she was grieving for another, from a sense of duty . . ."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Wentford, "I said so."

"It takes the old—I beg your pardon, ma'am, the older—to understand the young. From a sense of loving duty, she grieved. It is Miss Sally's way to share a sorrow—and all the while she has a sorrow of her own greater than she can bear."

Mrs. Wentford asked in what relationship Jaunty stood to Mr. Lawrence.

"Butler, ma'am; not butler exactly—confidential butler . . ."

"Most confidential."

"Yes, ma'am;" and Jaunty heard Mrs. Lawrence's voice saying those very words. "She gave the children into my care," he added.

"And you have cared for them devotedly?"

"I have done what I could," he said simply.

"My son is coming," said Mrs. Wentford. She left the two together.

"There is nothing to wait for," said Captain Wentford.

"There is everything to wait for. The letter says . . ."

"It is quite impossible I should tell you what the letter says."

"Then it becomes my duty to tell you. Miss Sally says she was engaged to another; she was not. For the sake of one she loved she allowed her to think so—that one was the sister of the poor young man. It was the only way she thought she could show her sympathy. It was not a wise way; but where love is concerned Miss Sally is not wise. Now, sir, it lies with you. If you choose to resent the interference of an old man, you can go your way and forget all about Miss Sally—that she loved you—and, please God, in time she too will forget it. If, on the other hand, you forgive the old man for the love he bears the child, then when Panslea thinks it right that she should be better, you will come back. But you must remember that Panslea is old-fashioned. Panslea has given its heart to Miss Sally; its heart has been wounded by her sorrow, it must be allowed to heal, from the inside. Miss Anne must be considered—the memory of Mr. Beech must be considered. But, sir, the child can wait with hope—but you must say nothing—for she is no actress, and Panslea would know by the very joy in her face."

"But how will she know if I say nothing?"

"By my face, sir! She will look at me and she will say, 'Jaunty could not look so happy if I were not happy.' She has looked to me all her life for happiness."

"Then when shall I come?"

"June, sir, is her happiest time—she is at her best in June. She is a little freckled later. The winter will be dark, sir, but there is Panslea to be thought of. Panslea is behind the times—and we must keep pace with Panslea."

"And shall I not write?"

"Would you naturally answer the letter?"

Captain Wentford said there was no answer to the letter in ordinary circumstances.

And Neil Wentford went back to his mother, and they

walked in the garden till the shadows grew long at their feet, and the yew hedges rose black in the twilight, and the birds went to their rest in the branches of the trees.

"It will be difficult to wait, dear," said Mrs. Wentford.

XXIV

Now all this will be said to be very unnatural—that it could never have happened. But how does any one know what might happen if they had a Jaunty of their own to deal with? I am willing to admit that no nurse would have done all he did; she would have known her place better. No aunt would have done it, because she couldn't have made her niece cheap. But with a Jaunty it was different. He had promised Mrs. Lawrence—or he thought she had exacted the promise from him in that dying look she gave him—to take care of her children, and nothing would stop him; certainly no idle convention.

So back to Panslea he went with a lighter heart than he had known for months, and Sally meeting him said, "Why, Jaunty, what is it?"

"Till June, miss; till June!"

"You haven't said anything, Jaunty—not told any one?"

"Is it likely, miss? Till June; you can be brave till then?"

And she promised to be brave. June, anyway, was worth waiting for, and every day she looked braver and in Jaunty's eyes more beautiful. And Panslea approved her brave spirit, and one said to the other, "Perhaps some day she will learn to love another," and the suggestion was not resented; and in time from a suggestion it grew into a prayer—a prayer that was answered before it was breathed.

Jaunty found the hammer and nails and put them inside the case of the grandfather clock, so that he could find them at any time. He hesitated to nail down the rug because Panslea might wonder why it never slipped, which would entail explanations, and that would never do. Jaunty

was as old-fashioned in some things as he was in others. His mind and Miss Eleanor's mind were of the same thinking with regard to our advent into this strange world of ours. It was a thing no nice-minded person would mention until it was a fact accomplished. Once there, Jaunty approved of the fact, and Miss Eleanor was ready to paint it—especially if it chose hurriedly to leave the world into which it had so mysteriously entered.

Anne Beech lived from Monday morning till Saturday afternoon, and Jaunty knew why. He was glad of it. He liked Miss Beech and he had nothing to say against Mr. Mason except that he was Miss Mason's brother, but he was just enough to know that wasn't his fault.

Lord and Lady Bridlington made much of Sally. Lady Bridlington could not do enough. She was quite as foolish as he had been. Sally had now two armchairs in every cottage whether they were deserved or not.

Lord Bridlington couldn't refuse her anything because her eyes had grown so large. Lady Bridlington said they had always been that. She couldn't forget Sally's eyes that night on the yacht when Neil Wentford had looked at her. They haunted Lady Bridlington. And at last she summoned up her courage and wrote to Neil Wentford, and told him she wasn't quite sure she had been right about a certain person's engagement. But nothing happened, and she grew more and more unhappy—and thinner; that was the bright lining to her cloud. And she went on being unhappy—slightly unhappy.

Mr. Masters, once the desire for stained-glass windows and screens had possessed him—and seeing them almost within sight—began to strike out in other lines so as to be worthy of the stained-glass windows and carven screens. Panslea was alarmed. He ventured to suggest Choral Communion and Panslea was terrified, shaken to its foundations. Old Summers who had sung in the choir for fifty years had never heard tell of it—he for one was against it, and would rather resign than consent, and all of his

age and standing followed him; and they and his children and grandchildren made a goodly following.

In a very short time Panslea was in a state of revolution. Anne Beech did all she could to soothe and pacify. Mr. Lawrence talked to Mr. Masters, putting it to him gently yet forcibly, that it wasn't whether there was harm or not in a thing; it was rather whether a thing perfectly right and good in itself did harm by keeping people away from church. Mr. Masters said it was a matter of teaching—those who rebelled must stay away until they had learned.

Mr. Lawrence suggested that old Summers was too old to learn. Old Summers sang out of tune. "Ah, that is another thing," admitted Mr. Lawrence.

"Another reason," said Mr. Masters, "why we should be glad to get rid of him." There was much talking and little doing. Mr. Masters went one day to see Mrs. Hill. He thought very highly of Mrs. Hill. Although they might not see alike in all things, there was no denying she was a very good and spiritual woman. He foresaw little difficulty; she was just. He felt he could convince her. He went up the steep hill to the farm with hope high in his heart. She welcomed him, she bade him enter, she asked him to sit down; he begged her to sit down, and they both sat down.

"Now, Mrs. Hill," he said, "I am going to appeal to you—to your good sense—to your sense of justice," and he laid the whole matter before her.

She sat with her hands folded and she listened, her head bent. "Admirably submissive," thought Mr. Masters, and when he had finished he asked her what she thought. Was he right or was old Summers right about the Choral Service?

Mrs. Hill thought a moment, then said very gently, "If one of your children came to you, sir, to ask you for something he wanted very much—would he sing?" and Mr. Masters went his way not nearly as vexed and disappointed as he felt he ought to have been; and peace descended on

Panslea, and Summers went on singing in the choir, and he sang no more in tune than he had done before; but, as he said, he sang to God not to the congregation. It did not make the pain of the musical proportion of the congregation any the less; but they had this to console them, Summers grew no younger as the days went by. When his grandchildren are grown up they may have learned differently—and Panslea with them. It is perhaps a matter of teaching. The question is, From whom does Mrs. Hill learn?

Panslea knew full well that if God willed it so, old Summers would sing in tune in the next world. Janet went so far as to say it could have been done in this one, because she had heard of some girl who had been taught to sing in tune by suggestion—who naturally could not sing one note in tune. Panslea shook its head. It was no use suggesting anything to old Summers.

XXV.

It was a proud day for Jaunty when he was bidden to London to see Pamela's baby. He resented a little the fact that it was Pamela's, and not some one else's, which was a little hard on Pamela. Jaunty put his hand to his heart to see how it bore the excitement. If his heart stood this one, wouldn't it perhaps stand another greater? So often did he put his hand to his heart during the journey to London that a kind old lady sitting opposite him leant forward and asked him if he were suffering. Jaunty said not suffering from anything more than a very natural excitement.

"But that shouldn't hurt," she said. Jaunty said it didn't.

Finding the old lady kind and seeing her interested, he told her the whole story of his life since he had lived with Mr. Lawrence—at least, he meant to tell her all, but the train went too fast and the miles were too few, and by the time London was reached the old lady knew only half the charm and beauty of Sally and nothing of Mademoiselle. So when she went to look after her luggage Jaunty followed her with offer of help, and said, "I forgot to mention the partially paralysed French lady Mr. Lawrence fetched from London to teach Miss Sally French—a most excellent and good woman."

"Thank you, thank you; I am so glad to know—not wholly paralysed," said the old lady. "I hope your good brave heart will keep going well and strong for many a long day.—Yes, dear, it's all here, thank you."

The "dear" was a slip, and it came as a shock to Jaunty, but it meant of course that the old lady belonged to a large family, and he felt that if he had lacked restraint she had gone a step further in calling him "dear."

Arrived at Mr. Monk's house Jaunty detected signs of excitement in the butler's manner. "All well?" he asked, his heart playing him tricks all the time.

"All well," answered the butler with the grave reassurance of one who has been through it—and knows.

"Why didn't you say so," said Jaunty snappily, "instead of standing there?" and the butler was offended and handed him over to the footman, who murmured something about "as well as could be expected under the circumstances." Then he rang a bell and said unnecessary things up a speaking-tube. As if Mrs. Monk wouldn't let Jaunty see the baby without all this trouble! Had she ever caught a trout that she hadn't brought straight to him knowing that it would lose nothing in the weighing? . . .

Jaunty saw the baby—and he didn't see the baby because of the mist of tears that was in his eyes. He straightway forgave Pamela all things—remembering no more the sins of her youth—they were all forgotten as a dream. All that mattered was this scrap of masculine humanity. "Miss Sally's nephew," he murmured; "Her grandchild, and She so young herself . . ."

"The mother? Yes," said the nurse, anxious to please.

"No, no," said Jaunty; "*She* was."

The nurse nodded. He was strange, this funny old man. She asked if he were suffering, and he said no, it was excitement.

"When you've seen as many as I have," she said, "they won't excite you;" and she tickled the baby's chin to make him laugh when there was nothing to laugh at. He hadn't lived long enough to see a joke. Jaunty sniffed. What were numbers? He supposed he couldn't see *her*?

"Who—the mother?"

"Of course."

"Well, I don't know—are you a relation?"

"Do I look it?" he asked indignantly.

"I see a likeness—a strong likeness—in the baby," said the nurse, leaning over the bassinette; and a likeness there

certainly was in the colour of the two faces—one young and wrinkled and red, the other old and wrinkled and red.

Mr. Monk was very kind to Jaunty. He said Mrs. Monk was tired, but if Jaunty would stay the night he should see her the next day, and Jaunty stayed. This entailed the writing of a letter . . . a French letter. It must be done, and he sat down at the nursery table to do it.

“MADEMOISELLE,” he wrote,—“Le petit garçon est beau comme un ange; il est très—like Miss Pamela was at that age—mais plus rouge. I bear the excitement well—we all do.—Yours faithfully,

“JAUNTY.”

Jaunty followed his letter, and arrived in Panslea a few hours after it had been read. When Mademoiselle asked if the baby was all right, he said it was. What about his letter, the French part? Mademoiselle said it was excellent, what there was of it.

“Same with the baby,” he said.

“But tell me more,” begged Mademoiselle; and Jaunty told her everything that had happened to him, everything that had been said to him, from the moment he had set foot in Mr. Monk’s house. With awed reverence he described Pamela. Never in her life had she looked so good, or so like her mother.

She really seemed pleased with the baby, which he had never expected she would be. At that Mademoiselle raised her eyes heavenwards. “Mon cher, is she not a woman, the adorable Pamela—first of all things a woman—that was the trouble. Did I not say always that she was at heart the child of truth and goodness?”

“They must have been of the French variety,” said Jaunty.

“And Mr. Monk?” asked Mademoiselle, ignoring Jaunty’s last speech.

“Mr. Monk?” asked Jaunty, raising his hands in mock

horror. "When he has had to do with two, as I have, he won't be so excited."

At that moment Mr. Lawrence came in to say Miss Mason would like to see Jaunty, and Jaunty went down to see Miss Mason, wondering what right *she* had to know about babies, and he found not only Miss Mason, but Miss Beech, and Miss Doe and Miss Eleanor Doe, and Mrs. Masters, all gathered together. He told them all about the baby. The baby was small; but there was much to tell, and in what he told there was much of truth and much more of imagination, pure and simple. After he was done and his audience dispersed, Anne Beech said to him, "And I have something to tell you, Jaunty."

And Jaunty said he knew what it was.

"How?" she asked, with the thing written so plainly on her face that any one might have read it who had learned his letters.

Jaunty couldn't say; he knew it, that was all.

"And you wish me happiness."

"As I would wish it for my Miss Sally," and more he couldn't say. Then he added:

"If she—my Miss Sally—came to care some day for some one else, miss—what would you say?"

"I should say 'Thank God,'" said Anne.

Jaunty looked at her, saw that she spoke the very truth, saw the tears in her eyes, and said:

"She does, miss."

"Thank God," said Anne, true to her word. "What are you looking for, Jaunty?" for Jaunty was looking around.

"I remember," he said; and he went to the clock, opened the case and took out the hammer and nails.

"The rug slips, miss; the baby—we must be careful."

"You dear, funny old Jaunty."

Jaunty stooped to tack down the rug; as he did it he staggered. Anne steadied him and he caught hold of the banister.

"Jaunty, what is it?"

"It's only excitement, miss. With care, the doctor says I shall live till . . ."

"Jaunty, dear Jaunty."

"Doctors don't know, miss—don't be alarmed. They make far too much fuss about babies; it's money to them, of course. But it gives women an undue sense of their own importance—it makes fools of men. I forgot all the trouble Miss Pamela ever was when I saw her lying there—she was so like her mother. If a baby can do that—there should be more of them."

XXVI

PANSLEA settled down into winter, quiet winter days. Jaunty was going to have a Christmas tree for the baby. You couldn't begin too young with children—besides it would amuse Miss Sally. She was happier, there was no doubt about that. "It will be all right, Jaunty? You are sure it will?" she asked.

"All in God's good time," he answered.

"Not in your good time? Are you sure it's not yours?"

And he didn't deny it—didn't seek to deny it.

Matilda knitted woollen boots by the dozen. There was a stack of them on the workroom table, and into every stitch she knitted was woven joy and happiness, and Jaunty put his fingers into the boots and smiled at their smallness. "Do you do them out of your head, Matilda?" he asked. Matilda said she had directions. She pointed to a sheet of notepaper, yellow with age and broken at the folds. Jaunty sniffed. He knew the date of those directions. He would rather she had worked from others. These would open wounds. He suggested a variety in sizes, and Matilda said he was encroaching on her department; and he begged her not to go back into her old ways—contrary ways—and she, knowing the ways had been Jaunty's, not hers, was generous enough not to say so, and she added more stitches and used finer needles, and so deceived, and at the same time satisfied Jaunty—mere man that he was.

Pamela, Mr. Monk, Master Monk—or the baby monkey, as Pamela called him—two nurses and a maid, all came for Christmas, and those that couldn't put up at Mr. Lawrence's went to the farm, and the glories of Mrs. Monk's home in London were told in the village. But Panslea

laid claim to the beauty of Mrs. Monk. Panslea had brought her up.

The Christmas tree was decorated by Jaunty, and he gave the baby a trumpet, and no one blamed him for it, because the baby bubbled down it and didn't blow, so it was as good a present as any other.

The mouthpiece was china. Jaunty pointed that out with pride, and was furious when it was sterilised every day. He had brought up two children without nonsense of that kind.

Mademoiselle was busy translating French nursery rhymes into English for the baby, and English nursery rhymes into French—also for the baby—and a happy humming came from her room as she worked.

Miss Eleanor would have loved to paint the child, but refrained even from thinking about it, for fear—— She would rather never paint it than that it should . . .

Her sister, seeing the light of painting in her eyes, said, "My dear Eleanor, in your love for your art, you forget . . ."

"Never, dear, never; children come first—art follows."

In time winter gave way to the promise of spring; then spring fulfilled her promise, loyally, to the very last word in buds; and she laid carpets of purple and blue, and hung curtains of white and rose embroidered in gold; wreathed the trees in garlands of blossom; painted the heavens azure by day, saffron by night; starred the sward with jewels; set light to the gorse-bushes on the hill; rained showers of diamonds, set in the pure gold of sunshine; made the birds to sing from the very joy of living, building and nesting—and yet Sally looked for more. Even though she found a little of Heaven imprisoned in the speedwell she counted her world lost, and she watched Jaunty. His good spirits persisted. He never looked depressed or despondent, and she didn't dare give up the hope that burned in his brave old eyes.

"Is it coming soon, Jaunty—must it be June? June comes so slowly," she said one day.

"Soon? What is soon? Does the spring come soon to the withered branches of the tree—does the sap seem long in rising? Does release come soon to the prisoner who knows relief is on its way? Does happiness ever come flying? Doesn't it come slowly that it may leave its foot-marks on the path so that others may find the way?—I am no poet, miss, but do you understand?"

And she had to say she understood.

XXVII

It was to come sooner than Jaunty thought.

"If a beautiful young creature can spare a few minutes to an old woman, the old woman will be very grateful, and the young one—she hopes—may not repent of her kindness. The name of the old woman is Wentford." In such a manner it came.

The writer went on to say if Sally would send a message by the bearer the writer of the note would be with her in a very short time; in fact, she was waiting outside. Sally read the note over and over again, and when she had read it her heart felt suffocating with joy.

Jaunty waited to know what the note was about.

Sally asked him if he had any business papers for her father, and he said he could always find some—if necessary.

"Well, for twenty minutes, Jaunty; please, will you keep him?—just for twenty minutes. Every other moment of my life I shall want him—and you!" Jaunty shook his head; he knew better.

"It's good news, miss?" he asked.

"Jaunty dear, I am going to feel something of what it must be to have a mother. . . ."

Jaunty looked jealously at the picture that hung on the wall. Sally saw the look, understood it, and said, "She would be glad—she is glad, Jaunty."

"Twenty minutes? The income-tax paper will just do it," he said, and he went away. Now that happiness was within reach of his young lady, he would withhold it from her, from feelings of mean and petty jealousy. He knew himself mean and petty, and therein lay his salvation. He tried to announce Mrs. Wentford, but couldn't because of the tears that were in his voice.

Mrs. Wentford walked into the room, looked round, and seeing Sally standing in the window held out her arms. It was all the invitation Sally needed.

"My beautiful child," said Mrs. Wentford; then she held her at arm's length and said, "I'm not surprised now—I couldn't believe all my Neil told me. Now tell me: am I wrong in coming, or am I right?"

"Oh, right," said Sally, blushing exquisitely, with her soul in her eyes. "How did you know?"

"Need you know that so long as I do know? And as I do know, ought I to stand back when perhaps I might help him? Now, my child, I'm not going to deprive Neil of any of his rights. I am not going to make love to you in any kind of way, but I want to know if I may tell him he has waited long enough?"

"Has he been waiting?" asked Sally.

"Do you know him so little?"

"No, no; but . . ."

"But you must have your sacred things that you can't talk about, of course; but I may tell him he has waited long enough, and you know it will bring him here as quickly as car can bring him—you don't mind that?"

"I shall be waiting," said Sally.

"I shall not tell him I have seen you. I shall only say I have heard that he has waited long enough."

"What he heard about another was never true—but I could not say so. Dear mother of Neil, there is one thing I must say. I wanted him to be the only one—and the world will think . . ."

"My child, the world will soon forget; and, after all, the love of a dear boy could do you no harm in the eyes of the world, and if you had loved him—it would have been natural enough, wouldn't it?"

Sally couldn't say; in fact, she found it very difficult to say anything. Nothing seemed natural. Mrs. Wentford saw that; knew it was the most natural thing in the world; knew that no mother has a right to intrude where sons fear

to tread, so she said, "It is only that I am a jealous mother and wanted to see what kind of a child-woman she was whom my son loved. He's been everything to me; let me gain a daughter and not lose a son. Is this your beautiful mother?"

She went and stood before the portrait of Mrs. Lawrence, and the girl looked out from the canvas on to the other girl—her child—and on to the much older woman, and there was the smile in her eyes that Sally knew so well. It seemed to deepen, her lips seemed to move. "She might be a child," said Mrs. Wentford.

"She's older now," said Sally, "that's what she was when . . ."

"May I see him?"

Sally went to fetch her father. She brought him back. She opened the door—saw him hold out his hand—saw Mrs. Wentford take it—then she closed the door on them—the unfortunate parents each demanding of the other what they most loved in the world.

"I have not been quite honest, Mr. Lawrence," said Mrs. Wentford; "I could not wait the full time. I had to see your child."

"What time?" asked Mr. Lawrence.

"That wonderful old man who calls himself a butler said it must be June; that Neil must wait till June—and I came to see. Must he wait? He arrives home from abroad tomorrow—must he wait? It has been long as it is."

Then seeing that Mr. Lawrence was puzzled she asked if he didn't know; and Mr. Lawrence said he had, of course, heard of her son, but he had not known what Sally's feelings were; he had imagined . . .

"And now that you know?"

Mr. Lawrence said he would rather have heard it from Sally herself. "Forgive me; I am a jealous father," he pleaded.

"It's what I said of myself a moment ago, as a mother.

It is what we parents must feel if we really love—but for a moment only; then real love must triumph.”

“Sally is more to me than anything in the world.”

“And Neil to me.”

“How did Jaunty know?” asked Mr. Lawrence.

“Does it matter how he knew so long as he did know?”

Mr. Lawrence supposed not; but Jaunty was uncanny in the way he always knew everything.

Mrs. Wentford had not come to talk about Jaunty. She had seen Sally; it was enough. Mr. Lawrence had not mentioned money matters, which was curious; then she remembered he was unlike other people; but as he said good-bye to her he promised her Sally. He did not say so in words, but Mrs. Wentford read it in his eyes.

“He will be good to her?” he asked.

“What a question to ask a mother!” murmured Jaunty who overheard. “Will he never learn?”

Mrs. Wentford went without seeing Sally again, and Mr. Lawrence, having seen her off, went back to the library and stood before the portrait of Sally’s mother. As he was standing there Sally came into the room, and putting her arms round him buried her face in his coat. He held her. Then gently he raised her face, and looking at her tenderly saw softly shining in her eyes the light that had shone in the eyes of her mother.

“What did he say?” said Jaunty as Sally came out of the room.

“Nothing!”

“He wouldn’t,” said Jaunty, “he wouldn’t trust himself. Does the young man know, I wonder, what he is asking for? How can we give it?”

Jaunty knew that at this moment Mr. Lawrence must have gone back in thoughts to those happy long-ago days, so it became his duty to disturb him. He went into the library.

“How did you know, Jaunty?” Mr. Lawrence asked, looking up as Jaunty came into the room.

"Must you know, sir?"

"Why not?"

"I would ask you to spare me, sir."

"No, tell me;" and if Mr. Lawrence had but known he would not have pressed the question.

"It's the only thing I have ever done of which I shall be eternally ashamed. I determined to read Miss Sally's love-letter. I should have read it—it seemed to me the only way of getting to the bottom of a bad business—I should have read it even had not the puppy delivered it into my hands. I read it knowing it was Miss Sally's letter—the puppy saved me the humiliation of looking for it. I make no excuses for myself. I read the letter on purpose because I saw she was unhappy—I *knew* she was."

"It was no excuse, Jaunty," said Mr. Lawrence, a little jealous perhaps.

"None, sir; but now it is done, and it has brought happiness to Her child, am I bound to grieve—till the end of my days?"

"It was the only way?" asked Mr. Lawrence.

"The only way."

"She wouldn't have told you?"

"What she wouldn't tell her father? Never, sir."

That was clever of Jaunty. He healed a wound he did not know he had made.

"Well, Jaunty, all you've been all your life must be taken in extenuation," and Jaunty went from his master sorrowful and sore at heart.

The sight of Sally, radiant, beaming, blessing him, restored his faith in the world and in himself. "*You* forgive me, miss?" he asked.

"Jaunty, Jaunty, I don't know what you have done, but you shall be numbered among the saints. Nobody understands as you do, Jaunty. You always did—do you remember? I seem to be a child again—nobody understands as you do."

And for this moment and others Jaunty had lived. It

was not an entirely happy moment; but the joy outweighed the unhappiness. He went back to the library and, opening the door, he said:

"Sir, there's no reason any one should know how I gained my knowledge?"

"No, Jaunty, no reason that I can see.—Here, Jaunty! I forgive you, you understand that?"

"It's all the forgiveness I want. I wouldn't disappoint you for anything in the world."

"Not even for . . .?" Mr. Lawrence pointed to the door.

"Not even for Miss Sally—now that she is happy."

XXVIII

THE next morning at the same hour that Mrs. Wentford had come, Neil came. Jaunty announced him, then closing the door he went to Mr. Lawrence and said, "He's come—you won't go in?" and Mr. Lawrence, pretending to be indignant, said, "You take too much upon yourself." Then he saw Jaunty's face, saw what a burden of sorrow he was bearing now that the time had come, and said, "As bad as that, Jaunty?"

"I shall soon give up my charge, sir."

"No, you mustn't do that; we can't do without you."

Jaunty smiled. He was glad to hear it, in a way.

He smiled as he trudged upstairs; Matilda must not be left out of this. He stopped every now and then on the stairs; he was out of breath from excitement. He went to the workroom.

"It's all right, Matilda," he said.

"It's kind of you to tell me so, Mr. Jaunty. You are out of breath."

"What else should I be at my age? Will you tell Serena? and tell her her cooking will pass muster to-day. Tell her it's all right, I haven't time. Tell her pancakes will do—anything will do—he won't know what he eats to-day."

And Matilda's heart swelled within her. Serena's wooden leg had won her confidences in the past. Now Matilda had been told and not Serena. Serena had stood too long on the merits of her wooden leg.

Jaunty went downstairs into the pantry—that was not really a pantry—and he sat down at his table. He turned the key in the drawer and opened it. He took out a packet of letters. From several he drew out one. It was addressed to "My Sally, to be given to her the day of her engage-

ment." The rest he tied up again and closed the drawer. The one letter he had taken from the others he put in his breast coat pocket. Then he took up a pen. . . . The pen dropped from his fingers.

And Sally, not knowing that Jaunty had relinquished his charge, talked to Neil. "But you should have known," she insisted, "that day by the river."

And Neil said that for two glorious hours he had known—that he had been told . . .

"You should have known I did it to save Anne from sorrow. It seemed the only way."

"And why didn't you tell me to save *me* from sorrow? What should I know of Anne?"

"Could I have told? If I had, it would have made it useless."

"You left me much to guess."

"I thought you would have known by the river. It seemed then that everything was explained."

"Yet we said nothing."

"It was what you didn't say that was so wonderful."

"You understood?"

"Everything you didn't say. Then on the yacht—you looked . . ." Sally put her hands over her eyes to shut out the memory of that look.

Neil drew them away gently. "Darling, I was so unhappy."

"If only you had asked me to explain—had forced me to . . ."

"I wrote . . ."

"But by then *I* had begun not to understand . . ."

"If it hadn't been for Jaunty . . ."

"Dear, wonderful Jaunty. Let's go and tell him."

"One moment, Sally; look at me!"

And she looked at him—after that there could be no doubts.

"Are you happy?"

"All but for one thing."

"And that?"

She told him. "You don't mind?" she asked.

"Poor old Jimmy!" Neil looked at her tenderly. "Sally, have you realised it is a soldier you have promised to marry?"

She realised it.

"And if I must go way . . . without you?"

"I shall wait."

"And if I come home . . . wounded?"

"I shall bind your wounds."

"And if . . . I don't come home?"

"I shall join you—on what Pamela calls the farthest of all frontiers—where she says I shall wait for . . ."

"Who?" asked Neil jealously.

"Oh, nobody!"

"I must know. Tell me!" he pleaded. Jimmy he didn't mind—poor Jimmy; but another . . . "Tell me!" he insisted. "Do I know him?"

Sally shook her head.

"Have I ever heard of him?"

"Never, never," said Sally. Of that she was certain.

"Are you fond of him?"

"Not yet; I shall be—some day—very."

"I will try to like him, for your sake; but do tell me. Sally, I'm horribly jealous. Tell me!"

"If you *must* know—my grandson! Let's go to Jaunty—he will be so happy."

But Mr. Lawrence had been before them. He had gone into the pantry; he had called Jaunty. There was no answer. Jaunty was sitting at his table, his head bent low.

"Jaunty, the child is so happy, so radiant; and she owes it to you. Jaunty!"

There was no answer, and Mr. Lawrence knew why. What he did not know was what Matilda would have known at once. Which was that Jaunty had probably already

taken charge of two angel babies, and was putting their wings straight and tidying them up all round, so that when their mother joined them she should say, "Why, this must be Jaunty's doing; I have heard all about him—he brought up the Lawrence children. You will be a great comfort to me, Jaunty!"

Sally came to the door. "Jaunty!" she called; and for the first time in her life he did not answer.

"He is not there," said her father.

"Then we must find him," she said; "he hates not to know things."

And for that very reason, if for no other, I must say nothing more of Mr. Lawrence, Pamela, Sally, or Panslea, because Jaunty would hate not to know. Of Mrs. Hill—just one word more.

XXIX

JANET MASON said to Mrs. Hill, "Did Mrs. Lawrence really give Jaunty charge of her children?"

Mrs. Hill did not answer at once; then she said, very gently, "Panslea never questioned it. . . . Shall we do as Panslea did?"



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